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GAUNTLET.

BY LORD GORELL.

CHAPTER XXVII.

It was the custom at Darlingby that when there were visitors the children were not brought down to the drawing-room after tea as a matter of course but only by request. Cecilia did not know whether to be relieved or disappointed that she had been allowed to take them up without anything having been said as to their reappearance. She passed a quiet hour with them in the day-nursery, both children being unusually good; Felicity was extremely busy rearranging the furniture in her dolls' house, and Danny, who was nothing if not imitative, thereupon occupied himself most diligently in sticking all the grasses, buds, and bits of stick he had acquired in the course of the afternoon into the dolls' house he had insisted upon receiving also as a present—he called his occupation 'putting vi'lets in my do' house'; why, he was either not competent or else unwilling to explain.

Cecilia was able to continue with little interruption her ache of wondering. Peace was slightly interfered with by the beginnings of a squabble as to the ownership of an extremely battered and headless doll, but by that time it was Danny's hour for bed, and division restored harmony at once.

As soon as both children were tucked up and murmuring themselves to sleep, Cecilia ran downstairs and, after sorting out the miscellanea that collected like flotsam at the bottom of the perambulator, looked in, in passing through the hall, at the dining-room table. Places were laid for four only: that seemed an assurance that John was not expected. Cecilia knew at last by the feeling of flatness that immediately possessed her that her earlier ignorance was mere self-deception. His appearance or absence mattered to her terribly: it was the one thing in her life that did matter. And yet to what end? She was greatly vexed with herself for the uselessness of her longing.

She was moving away to return upstairs when the butler entered and asked her if he were to lay for her also. Up to the moment

of that enquiry she had intended to dine upstairs whether John came or stayed away, but, being faced with the necessity for immediate and normal decision, she answered in the contrary sense. On regaining the nursery, she found a message from Lady Wraybourne expecting her down to dinner and was glad that there was no need for her either to contradict her direction to the butler or to send an excuse to her employer. She was listless and at a loss : a solitary evening would, she was sure, have merely added to her consciousness of grievous dissatisfaction with life.

She delayed her descent to the drawing-room till the gong rang and then sped down with steps of trepidation : John might have come or be coming notwithstanding appearances. She sighed to herself when she discovered that he certainly was not : Lady Wraybourne, Mr. and Mrs. Standish, and Miss Marchant were all down and only delaying, it seemed, for her. She apologized, but found her words unnecessary.

‘We know what children are, these children at any rate,’ said Lady Wraybourne, smiling very affectionately at her.

Cecilia forbore to say that both Felicity and Danny had been fast asleep for at least half an hour : she felt oddly guilty and ashamed of all her hesitations. How kind Lady Wraybourne was to her and how hateful was the necessity that drove her forth into the wilderness again, a veritable scapegoat for a sin not her own ! Let her enjoy what she could whilst she could : soon she would be among strangers, a dependent of no account. It struck her with unusual force during dinner that here in the gracious atmosphere of Darlingby she was treated by all with a courtesy she was never again likely to experience : Lady Wraybourne had undertaken to help her to a fresh place, an assurance that she would receive kindly consideration, but here she was one with her employer, regarded for all her humble station as in all respects an equal. And not by Lady Wraybourne alone : Mr. and Mrs. Standish conversed with her with simplicity and enjoyment, even the rich and well-dressed Miss Marchant affected no airs of superiority towards her. Cecilia was touched, and in the warmth of the feeling her delicate complexion gained just the extra degree of colour that it needed for beauty ; her hazel eyes began to sparkle, and her laughter, like the immortal little brook of Coleridge, to sing a quiet tune. She was not happy, she never could be happy again, but at least it was occasionally within her power to give a very attractive appearance of happiness.

It was as she was laughing at an anecdote amusingly related by Mr. Standish after dinner was over and they were once again in the drawing-room that she overheard a few sentences that drove laughter from her lips.

'What an unusually attractive girl Miss Brooke is,' she first heard Mrs. Standish say to Lady Wraybourne in what the speaker believed to be an undertone.

Cecilia heard no more of Lady Wraybourne's low reply than the concluding words, 'lovely to-night.'

'The prospect of freedom, I suppose,' Mrs. Standish rejoined. 'Looking after children can't be much fun for a girl of her class. I expect she's only taken it up temporarily just for something to do: what's her history?'

'Oh,' Cecilia then heard Lady Wraybourne say, the words being uttered with the distinctness of surprise, 'you think she's glad to go? P'r'aps you're right; that hadn't struck me.'

Cecilia was switched suddenly into misery: not for the world would she consciously have given Lady Wraybourne that impression. Mr. Standish was disappointed with the reception of the conclusion of his anecdote, and it had begun so well too: he could not understand it. The best part lay in the final sentence and that won him not even a smile: he was thanked politely, but without responsiveness, and almost immediately afterwards deserted. He drifted, discouraged, to the neighbourhood of his wife; Cecilia, longing to slip away yet fearful of strengthening thereby the false impression she had so disastrously given, moved sadly to the book-case with the pretence of effecting a needed rearrangement of its contents.

She was close to Lady Wraybourne who had turned towards Miss Marchant, and she tried by an expressively appealing glance to show her how erroneous Mrs. Standish's thought had been. She met Lady Wraybourne's eyes, but could not gather from them whether she had at all conveyed her meaning, and the next moment Lady Wraybourne was engaged in conversation and looking away again. For several minutes Cecilia, self-absorbed, heard nothing, and then out of the dejection of her mind she caught the name that could never fail to cause her heart to vibrate. The talk had veered to John: they were discussing the beauties of Hartley Harland. Embarrassed and yet fascinated, she lingered by the book-case, drinking in each word: they had slipped into the subject that concerned her more than any one in the world, and she had no part in it.

'I should like very much to go over it,' Miss Marchant was saying. 'It's one of the places I've always wanted to see.'

'You shall,' answered Lady Wraybourne. 'John told me to bring every one who cared to come any day I liked.'

'I hope he's going to settle down there and make a real home of it at last,' said Mr. Standish.

'If his wife lets him, he will,' remarked Mrs. Standish. 'He's always adored the place, but she doesn't sound attracted somehow—or attractive, for that matter.'

'Now, Eleanor,' protested her husband mildly, 'we know nothing about the new Lady Harland.'

'That's just what I'm complaining about,' retorted his wife.

'John's satisfied, that's the great thing,' remarked Lady Wraybourne. 'He doesn't say much, but I know him well enough to read between the lines. He's terribly in love, and after three months too.'

Cecilia heard and trembled so violently that she feared she would betray herself: she sank into a chair and opened the book she had been holding idly in her hand and bent her unseeing eyes upon it as though in deep study. None of the four speakers glanced in her direction: so she remained motionless throughout a moment of the most agonizing beauty. 'Satisfied?' Oh, what in the world could be meant by such a word? And could it conceivably be that Lady Wraybourne's knowledge of him was right? Cecilia's blood, that had rushed to her cheeks wildly, drained out of them again as she contemplated this impossibility. As a voice far away, she heard Mrs. Standish's reply, 'Three months isn't much. Why isn't he with her, or she with him?'

'You'd better ask him,' responded Lady Wraybourne brightly. 'All I know is what he tells me, and he says he's frightfully busy seeing to everything.'

'It had been fearfully let down,' said Mr. Standish. 'I remember it in the days of old Sir John——'

'The present one's father?' inquired Miss Marchant.

'No, his uncle, a splendid fellow. He was a great friend of mine. He took a real pride in the place.'

'I gather John does too,' said Lady Wraybourne: 'I've not been over there for a long while, but I know there's been a lot done to it.'

'It needed it after the way it had been neglected,' said Mr. Standish warmly. 'Scandalous to see a fine old place in the wrong

hands; but what could one expect? He was not only a waster but just the sort of waster that does the most harm.'

'*De mortuis*——' said Lady Wraybourne.

'Oh, I know, and now that he is dead, least said soonest mended, I suppose. It's not exactly a nice thing to say, I know, but I must confess I wasn't made miserable by the news.'

'What news?' inquired Miss Marchant. 'Who are you speaking of?'

'I forgot you hadn't known the family. Old Sir John, my friend, was to be envied in every respect but one: he had a rotten son, rotten in every way. The last Sir John Harland had peculiar tastes, spent money like water, never came near either Hartley Harland or Garston, and left a nice little crop of troubles for his cousin, the present man.'

'Are they all called John, then?'

'As a rule.'

'They always are, Oliver,' corrected Mrs. Standish: 'it's one of their family foibles, very confusing too. All Johns and all with that unusual head of hair.'

'Thereby hangs a tale,' murmured Mr. Standish, 'at least if Mrs. Gossip speaks true.'

'As she invariably does, of course,' put in Lady Wraybourne. 'What does she say this time?'

'Well, I—er,' stammered Mr. Standish. 'Nothing that I believe, naturally; I've known John Harland too long.'

'What are they saying about him?' inquired Lady Wraybourne with some sharpness.

'Oh, well, you know how people talk. They say—I don't believe it, of course—but I've heard a curious rumour, and really you know I shouldn't be altogether surprised if there wasn't something in it. It would account for the rather odd absence of Lady Harland.'

'What in the world is there odd about that?' exclaimed Lady Wraybourne. 'Great heavens, man and wife aren't chained together! Can't the poor man come to Hartley Harland by himself without giving rise to scandal?'

'I didn't mean to infer——' began Mr. Standish.

'It so happens I'm one of the few people who know the truth,' went on Lady Wraybourne, without waiting for Mr. Standish to complete his obviously untruthful sentence. 'There is a scandal and, as you've said so much, I won't keep it to myself.'

'Oh, never do that!' cried Mrs. Standish, laughing.

'I don't, often, and in this case it's all to John Harland's credit, my John, I mean.'

'Which one is that?' asked Miss Marchant.

'This one who's my neighbour now. His mother was my dearest friend and I've known him all his life.'

'What's the scandal? About some one else?' asked Mr. Standish.

'Trust a man to ask,' laughed Mrs. Standish.

'You were complaining a moment ago about Lady Harland,' he protested.

'That's quite different.'

'It's a very ordinary sort of scandal, really,' said Lady Wraybourne, cutting in with decision, 'except perhaps in the sequel. John Harland, the last one, I mean, had no morals as far as I ever discovered: he never married, but he ought to have been married more than once, if all's true. At any rate last autumn, a few months after his death and just after John, my John Harland, had married, one of the ladies arrives upon the scene, boy and all. She didn't pretend she'd been married: the boy wasn't the lost claimant or anything of that kind. But she'd seen the announcement of my John's marriage, hadn't heard of her own rascal's death—he'd deserted her, I gathered, a couple of years back at least—and got the two mixed. She wanted money, of course.'

'Blackmail,' muttered Mr. Standish.

'I suppose so, but my sympathies are with her all the same. She'd been left stranded by that wretch, in Canada, of all places, and naturally she was playing what cards she had.'

'And what did Sir John—your Sir John—do?' asked Miss Marchant with interest.

'Nothing to do with him,' said Mr. Standish.

'Nothing,' answered Lady Wraybourne, 'and he might have taken that line, but if he had he wouldn't have been John.'

'What did he do?' repeated Miss Marchant.

'He first investigated the business, and then when he had come to the conclusion that her story was genuine—and that's where the head of hair comes in, the boy was a Harland all right, hair and all—he arranged a pension for her and appointed trustees to safeguard the boy's education.'

'That was very generous of him,' cried Miss Marchant.

'Quite characteristic, at all events. There is a streak of generosity in John: I've noticed it before. He likes to understand,

that's all. He told me all about it, as he wanted my advice. I don't at all know if he'd approve of my telling, but of course you won't say anything about it, will you, unless people tell it to you all wrong ?'

'Of course not,' declared they all.

Cecilia rose to her feet, slowly, dizzily. She felt as though, if she sat a moment longer, she must spring up and scream. She had heard, casually spoken of a few yards from her, a story all the inferences of which battered about her ears like winds at war. She was too bewildered to understand anything except that there had been no truth in anything she had understood before. She swayed and grasped desperately at her senses.

'Going upstairs, Cecilia ?' she heard Lady Wraybourne's voice ask quietly.

The simple question helped her to restore herself to normality of behaviour, though not of thought. 'Yes, please,' she answered automatically, and was gone without another word.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

UPSTAIRS once more Cecilia was alone with her reflections, and piercing indeed they were. She was brave enough to rejoice that the man she loved stood out now in all the splendour with which she had first invested him : he was in her heart for ever freed from all stain. But that was the only place in which he was. Impulsive little idiot that she now felt herself to have been, she had run out of his life without inquiry, and by so doing had given over the rest of her days to loneliness and misery. It was altogether impossible now to believe that he still loved her, was 'terribly in love,' in Lady Wraybourne's words : to believe that was indeed to let the longing father the faith. He knew why she had left him : by some means he had discovered the woman and boy, and all was therefore clear to him. That was much ; but he had shown it was not enough. Generous he might be, she was sure he was ; he might even forgive, but he could never forget. And she could not live tolerated because once he had loved her and gone through the marriage ceremony with her. Better a thousand times to be unacknowledged than that.

But she was letting her imagination run away with her, so she told herself with anger. Who had ever so much as breathed a suggestion of acknowledgment ? He was 'satisfied' : Lady Wraybourne had said so. How the word burnt itself in upon Cecilia, like

a drop of acid ! Satisfied with the present position, that was what he had meant to convey. He need have no qualms of uneasiness about the silly girl he had married ; she was in safe hands, with his old friend, Lady Wraybourne, or passed on by her to other friends. He need not worry himself about her : she would not starve. Of course he was ' satisfied ' : was there ever a word in the whole range of human speech that had about it such a ring of inescapable doom ?

Over and over in her head, as she had in the first days of her flight, did Cecilia turn her memory of her talk with the woman in the train. As she did so, she ceased to blame herself so harshly : she had not been so idiotic as she had instantly rushed into thinking. The evidence had been very strong, too strong at least for her reason, though her heart had always held a doubt. Only one conclusion was possible, and in that there was little comfort, that Life was a dreadfully cruel and carnivorous beast, seeking whom it might devour and sparing none who were so hapless as to fall into its jaws. With throbbing head she lay down and with a dull ache in body and brain she awoke.

It had rained in the night, but the clouds were rolling away when she drew back the curtains, and as she dressed the children the sun broke gloriously out, flooding the nursery with gold. Through the open window drifted in the scent of the wet earth and all the songs of the busy birds. Felicity and Danny, bursting with health, skipped about more elusively than ever in the radiance of their youth ; and Cecilia felt herself a spiritless, leaden-footed solitary in their company on such a morning.

She was getting them downstairs for their outing and had reached the side-hall when Lady Wraybourne called to her. She had hoped to escape into the open air unobserved, feeling very little able to support either scrutiny or conversation, but she could in no circumstances find it impossible to be pleased to see some one from whom she had never received anything but the kindest consideration ; and the memory of Mrs. Standish's facile supposition rankled. She turned back therefore almost with eagerness, and before Lady Wraybourne could speak burst out,

' I'm glad you're alone. I do want to tell you Mrs. Standish is quite wrong ! '

Lady Wraybourne's eyebrows went up humorously, and she broke into smiles as she replied, ' But of course she is, always has been ever since I've known her. Most people are. What's she wrong about this time ? '

'I heard what she said to you last night,' replied Cecilia, a little disconcerted, 'before—before,' she hesitated, stammering, and then concluded bravely, 'before you talked of Hartley Harland, I mean.'

'What did she say to me?'

'That I was glad to be leaving.'

'Oh.' Evidently Lady Wraybourne had hardly expected this: she looked puzzled a moment; then her face cleared and she said lightly, 'Oh, well, she doesn't know everything, does she? As long as you and I understand one another, that's all that matters, isn't it?'

'Yes, indeed.'

'What I stopped you for,' went on Lady Wraybourne, 'was something quite different. Miss Marchant wants to see Hartley Harland, and Mr. and Mrs. Standish would like to go too. I suppose you won't be an angel and take them over for me? I've such a lot of letters to write, and John Harland's sure to keep us ages and make us stop to lunch.'

Cecilia's heart thumped horribly: why were such dilemmas being perpetually thrust before her? But even at the cost of disobeying Lady Wraybourne this was a thing she could not do. Go to Hartley Harland in charge of a party of visitors, and the day after she had learnt of John's guiltlessness—it was utterly beyond her. To go on any day when she might meet him there was an act that only dire necessity could have excused; she would have suffered tortures the whole visit lest he should misunderstand: but to go when chance word might reveal the conversation to which she had listened the previous evening, that could not be. Not to save her soul from damnation could she risk his being visited by the thought that the moment she had learnt the truth as to those two in the train, mother and son, she had flown to queen it at his old and lovely home. Utterly illogical the feeling might be, but it was at any rate an essential part of her, no more to be altered than her stature. If he had wished for her, knowing the reason she had fled, he had had his chance to show it: she might ask for his understanding, even for his forgiveness, but never for her own reinstatement. But how voice such a feeling? As the force of this and the impossibility of giving it expression rushed simultaneously upon her, she stared back at Lady Wraybourne with widening eyes of absolute dismay.

'Don't look so aghast, my dear,' she heard Lady Wraybourne say with a bantering air, after a silence that seemed an hour. 'I

see the prospect doesn't appeal to you : I forgot what a little recluse you've become.'

'I'm sorry,' stammered Cecilia.

'So'm I; but it doesn't matter. My letters can wait, and it's probably just as well for me to go.'

'Must either of us ?'

'I'm afraid so. They're shy of going by themselves. There's too much ceremony in this world altogether to my thinking. There, don't look so distressed.'

'I-hate refusing anything you ask.'

'You hardly ever do. I'd no business to ask it. Don't give it another thought.'

With a nod and a smile Lady Wraybourne limped energetically away. More spiritless than ever, Cecilia sought the children, who had gleefully taken advantage of the conversation to make their unaided way into the garden, Felicity leading, every inch of her suggestive of mischief, Danny stoutly following. They had completely disappeared by the time Cecilia emerged, and it took her some time to discover them. When she did, she was relieved : they had used the few minutes to fish in one of the rain-water barrels, oblivious to all but the imagined sport, and Felicity had wet sleeves and a stained coat and Danny was only less wet and stained because of his inability to reach over so far ; but they were alone. No John Harland was engaging their attention with an ease and humour to wring Cecilia's heart.

She scolded them well but without that sincerity which could alone penetrate into their consciences : they replied to her words with grins and invitations to her to fish likewise. Even when forcibly removed from a continued attempt to overbalance and precipitate himself head first into the barrel, Danny's only reaction was to assert vehemently and without a vestige of accuracy that that was where 'a little gween f'og lived, all by hisself in the garden.' Felicity, never an imitator, adopted as her plan for the avoidance of censure of herself a sprightly, voluminous, and confidential account of all Danny's misdoings since he had arisen that morning. The account was hardly ended by the time both children had been reclothed and taken out again.

The adventure, both felt, was a thoroughly satisfactory beginning to the day's opportunities ; and they kept Cecilia gratifyingly busy, both in body and brain, on coming out a second time. Even this did not tire either of them, and their resting times were so

arranged with an artlessness of skill that at no hour were both quiet, and after luncheon both went quite wild. The two discovered a sheet of tissue paper which was apparently their hearts' desire : they fell upon it avidly, rent it in every direction and strewed the floor with its bits ecstatically, Danny crying, ' We're feeding the dickey-birds, aren't we ? '

Not merely were the screams and cries deafening in their shrill tirelessness, but the nursery speedily looked as though a young earthquake had been in progress ; nor would the children take any heed of Cecilia's half-laughing, half-exasperated adjurations to them to tidy up and get ready to go out again. She was pursuing an evasive Felicity, red-cheeked with excitement and agility, round the table to the accompaniment of clamour from all three when the door was unexpectedly opened and the butler appeared. His dignity was to some extent impaired by Felicity, who, deserting the table, took instant cover behind him and by Danny who gleefully squeezed between his feet, saying, ' Bridge under ' the while ; but he managed to make himself heard and to deliver his message. ' Mrs. Macfarlane had called and specially wished to see the children for a moment. She couldn't wait long : could they be just brought down as they were ? ' The butler then fled, to avoid worse onslaughts, looking as soon as he was outside the nursery most dignified indeed.

The message was lacking in detail : Cecilia could not remember that she had ever heard of Mrs. Macfarlane. She supposed, however, that she must be some privileged friend either of Lady Wraybourne or of the children's parents. She hastily brushed the sobered children's hair, pulled their clothes into such respectability as could be managed at short notice, and descended with them. There was no one in the drawing-room : she went accordingly to the main hall. Standing there in one of the windows was a small, old figure, in a short-waisted, bottle-green dress and an odd little poke bonnet, who turned with impatient quickness at the sound of the children's approach. With a start of dismay Cecilia recognised ' Aunt Emily.' There could be no doubt about it ; the small, restless, eccentric figure was indelibly stamped upon her memory. She stood before her exactly as she had been at the wedding, in that moment when she had come up to her with such queer, such valuable generosity. In front of Cecilia was standing John's aunt, whose unexpected gift of money had made tolerable the first stages of her flight from John. Even as the memory flashed distinct

across Cecilia's brain, she heard the very accents she so clearly recalled,

'These are Evelyn's children, are they? Look healthy enough, to be sure. And you're their governess, are you? You're very young, to be in charge of two children.'

'Lady Wraybourne thought me old enough.'

'Sarah would: she's very impulsive. And I didn't say you weren't old enough. I said you were very young. And so you are. Your face is familiar too: haven't I seen you before?'

'I can't say where,' murmured Cecilia, dreadfully embarrassed.

'And I can't remember, but I'm sure I have or some one very like you.'

At this moment, to the equal relief of Cecilia and the children, a diversion was effected by the sounds of a car drawing up at the front door. It proved to be Lady Wraybourne, who hurried in with even more than her usual indifference to her age and lameness, exclaiming, 'How like you, Emily! Why didn't you come straight on to John's?'

'I wanted to have a look at Evelyn's children first,' answered Aunt Emily.

'And you have,' replied Lady Wraybourne, glancing keenly at the children, at Cecilia, and at her odd visitor.

'And I've seen that young lady before,' persisted Aunt Emily, nodding her bonnet energetically in Cecilia's direction.

It was not for some minutes that Lady Wraybourne could get from her her plans. Then she explained that she was motoring to stay with some friends near Whitby, had undertaken to look in at Darlingby and supposed she would have to stop for a cup of tea at Hartley Harland.

'That's it,' she cried then, smiling with pleasure. 'John's wife! That's the girl she reminds me of. I told you I've a good memory, and so I have.'

'Excellent,' murmured Lady Wraybourne, whilst Cecilia by attention to the children struggled desperately to hide her confusion. The attention fortunately was necessary and not merely pretence: Felicity and Danny, finding the visit of a strange, old, and indifferent lady boring and the hall devoid of excitement, were creating interest for themselves by quarrelling heatedly about nothing at all. Cecilia was not able to listen to Aunt Emily until she had separated and quieted them, and then the first words she heard were:

'Sarah, there's something wrong there.'

'My dear Emily,' rejoined Lady Wraybourne with some impatience, 'I assure you there's no ground for any such idea.'

'It's no use,' replied Aunt Emily obstinately. 'I know there is. I don't say she's bad; she's flighty, not the sort of girl at all that John ought to have married.'

'Have you seen her?'

'At the wedding, that's all.'

'Then how can you be so positive?'

'I like being positive. Besides, you agree with me, you know you do.'

'I really don't.'

'Why not?'

'I know what John's told me.'

'Told you,' repeated Aunt Emily triumphantly. 'John's proud and'll say anything. Is she with him at Hartley Harland?'

'No, but that means nothing.'

'Ah, but when has she been with him? That's what I can't find out. He's told you this and he's told you that, but what opportunities have you had for judging for yourself?'

'Well——' began Lady Wraybourne hesitatingly.

'No, no, Sarah,' went on Aunt Emily without waiting for an answer, 'I'll believe in her when I see her doing her duty and not before. She's obviously off enjoying herself like all these girls of to-day, and John won't admit it.'

Before Cecilia could decide on any move, the front door was opened and Mrs. Standish walked in, followed first by John Harland and then, at an interval, by Miss Marchant and Mr. Standish.

Cecilia, turning hastily at the sound, saw John's head appearing behind Mrs. Standish, saw his eyes directed first to her and then dart from her to Aunt Emily, on again to Lady Wraybourne and thence back to her all in a flash, saw an expression of relief leap across his face, she presumed at the tranquillity denoting the secret still preserved, saw finally the well-remembered look of humour take possession of him once more. Before she could do more than note his greeting, he strode in in a masterful manner, and, seizing Aunt Emily's two hands in his own, cried, 'So this is why Lady Wraybourne left us so suddenly! I might have guessed there was more in that telephone message than met the eye.'

'I heard Emily was here, waiting, so naturally I rushed.'

'Naturally,' he replied, squeezing Aunt Emily's hands affectionately.

'You can't humbug me, John!' cried the old lady, much pleased. 'I know you. You're up to mischief as plain as anything.'

John, with a lightning glance at Cecilia, put on an air of the utmost innocence as he answered, smiling, 'And what have I done now?'

Cecilia's ears were already tingling in anticipation of the inevitable inquiry as to his wife when a most welcome diversion was caused by Danny, who, gazing at John with the wide, blue eyes of a fellow-conspirator, cried delightedly, 'Hullo, you ugly daddy!'

To his further gratification this sally was hailed with more laughter than rebuke. He was not, however, left long to enjoy it. Under cover of the merriment Cecilia seized on him, signalled to Felicity to follow, and fled. Fortunately Felicity was wearied of grown-ups and indoors: she obeyed immediately, and Cecilia, her heart thumping both with relief and agitation, was in a few more minutes out of the garden and alone with the two children and her own recognition of distress.

CHAPTER XXIX

It was apparent that John Harland's humorous ingenuity had proved adequate to fence successfully even with the suspicious questioning of Aunt Emily. When Cecilia, rallying her nerves resolutely against the series of shocks they had successively sustained, descended with the courage of desperation to the drawing-room for dinner she found courage superfluous. All was as usual. Aunt Emily had passed on her way leaving no eddies of inquiry behind her, and John did not appear. The evening produced no qualms and was without incident.

The next day and the next were tranquil also: almost it seemed as though John either had grown tired of his sport or had felt that he had been needlessly challenging discovery. At all events he did not come to Darlingby, nor was suggestion made of a further visit to Hartley Harland. Mr. and Mrs. Standish departed to pay another visit, Miss Marchant returned to London: life at Darlingby resumed its former completely uneventful course. Cecilia, in spite of Lady Wraybourne's supposition, had previously not found that dull: now, in spite of what she had asserted, it seemed to her

a succession of wearisome, unprofitable hours, the burden of which nothing, not even the gaiety of the children, could assuage.

On the third day Lady Wraybourne commented aloud upon her lack of spirit. 'I've come to the conclusion,' she said, coming abruptly out of her boudoir as the children chattered and clattered downstairs, Cecilia in their wake, 'that you think me very stupid.'

'Lady Wraybourne, what do you mean?'

'You told me it wasn't dull up here, whereas I know perfectly well it is—that was before you decided to leave. I was certain you'd be bored, and you were certain you wouldn't be, and as a result you've been at it without any sort of rest or change. That won't do, and in any case we mustn't let these monkeys get too dependent upon you. This afternoon I'll take them for a run in the car and you go for a walk.'

'Hurrah!' shouted Felicity, racing on to relieve her exuberance.

'I'm going in the car to-morrow, aren't I?' echoed Danny, following with the air of one to whom all Time was the same.

'Have you been to the falls at Glissondale yet?'

Cecilia shook her head: she did not like to admit that she not only had been nowhere except once, disastrously, to Hartley Harland, but had had no wish to go anywhere.

'My dear, how unenterprising of you! It's a lovely expedition, especially in spring. I command you to take sandwiches and go immediately and don't be back till dark.'

Cecilia assented meekly and in less than an hour was on the road and glad of her obedience. Lady Wraybourne was right: she had been at her simple tasks too unremittingly to be able to shake off depression, and the views that opened out before her were full of loveliness and changing lights. Insensibly her spirits rose: whatever humanity might be, Nature was kindly, and in these dales she was alone with her comforter except for the very occasional passing of a car.

At first the road was winding, but after she had walked about an hour she entered upon a long sweep of enfolding hills where the road ran onward and slightly downward in a great curve. No house, no person was in sight as she set foot upon it. She walked on, sufficiently conscious of the activity that these many quiet weeks had abundantly restored to her to be grateful for the gift of health, whatever unhappiness Life held. Her short, quick steps carried her springily to about the middle of the curve where she was the one moving thing in all the sweep of landscape: then a

powerful car came swiftly up the long slope from the valley towards which she was tending. For twenty minutes at least Cecilia had had the whole world to herself, and she felt revived as much by the experience as by the clean, fresh breeze that had whipped her cheeks to roses. She had been thinking that whatever befell her she would be poor-spirited to despair: she had lost much but she had also had much, and of this some was treasure unstealable. She had been resolving that before she left Darlingby and plunged once more into the unknown she would take the first opportunity she had to tell John that she wanted to apologize for having ever doubted his honour: so much she owed both to him and to her own self-respect. Picturing the moment, she thought of herself as saying just that and nothing more and turning away: but her imagination would not be so truncated, and as she walked she heard in her mind's ear his eager, generous response. As a consequence her eyes were shining and a glory, of which she was wholly unaware, was softly upon her face. She stepped to one side as the big car sped towards her, her eyes roaming past it to the quiet hills: in a second she would be alone with them once more.

To her momentary vexation there was a grinding of brakes and the crunch of wheels arrested: strangers who wished to ask the way. They would break into the happiness to which her thoughts had brought her, but they would be gone again in a moment; she must not be churlish. With a smile renewed, Cecilia turned her eyes upon the two occupants of the car. Then of a sudden her smile was stolen from her: to imagine a conversation taking place at some undefined future and at one's own choosing is one thing; to find it thrust upon one immediately and without power of avoidance is wholly another. Descending from the seat beside the driver, his gaze upon her, was John Harland.

He had a look she had never seen, a blend of consternation and of fun, a look so comical that it almost swept away from Cecilia the swift flood of her embarrassment. What was in his mind? Something, it seemed, had happened, that even he, the ever-ready, was not instantly prepared to meet.

He sprang with nimbleness from the car and came hurrying towards her: almost unbelievable to Cecilia's understanding were the first words of his greeting, cheerily called out,

'Hullo, darling! You've got farther than I expected!'

Cecilia felt the world spin round her: she opened her lips to answer, but could frame no words. The next moment John was

close to her : under his breath he said hurriedly, with a backward gesture of his head, 'Uncle George. In the car there. Spotted you and insisted on stopping. Awfully sorry.'

Cecilia looked at him, a straight exchange of glance : he was concerned, but he was also terribly amused. For a flash of thought she was enraged, just long enough for a fresh leap of colour to her cheeks : then, with equal suddenness, humour came to her rescue. It was bitter, yes, without a doubt, salty to the spirit, but it had its humorous side.

'Thanks,' she said softly to John : then she went past him boldly. Out of the car had now clambered the driver, the big, gaunt, old man, with the Harland hair, unmistakable for all his years, showing in his short beard and beneath his cap, who had introduced himself to her as her new uncle at the wedding. 'Well met, Uncle George,' she said, taking refuge in the width of her ignorance in the phrase John had recently addressed to her.

'Eh, but you're looking bonny,' he remarked, shaking hands warmly and looking keenly at her. 'Marriage agrees with you, evidently, in spite of the gossips.'

'Have you ever known gossip true?' put in John Harland lightly from behind her. 'Ours is a regular runaway match, isn't it, Cecilia?'

'An admirable description,' she replied stoutly.

'You're not a bad walker,' remarked Uncle George. 'It must be the best part of ten miles you've come.'

'Hardly,' she answered, 'and, anyway, it's a good day.'

'Splendid,' agreed John.

'Well, you'll not be walking home, that's certain,' said Uncle George. 'Jump in.'

'But——' began Cecilia, greatly taken aback.

'No "buts" now : I'll take no denial. This husband of yours was for passing you by, declared you'd vowed to do your twenty-five miles to-day if you died for it and that nothing'd stop you, not even your uncle. But, by Gad, I've had fifty years' more practice at being obstinate than you have, and if I don't have my way, I'll never set foot in Hartley Harland again, and you won't like that, you know you won't!'

'I—I can't risk that,' she murmured, looking at John for support but getting none. He had tried to rescue her and failed ; now he was no longer challenging but enjoying the situation.

'Of course you can't. Besides, you're my niece, ain't you?'

I'm on my way to Scotland and I must lunch somewhere. I wasn't coming this way, but I ran into John last night in York and so I brought him along.'

'I didn't want to come, either,' put in John, 'and I've told him we're not ready for visitors yet; but he doesn't care.'

'Jump in!' commanded Uncle George imperiously. Cecilia still tried evasion, but he would have none of it. He cut her excuses short and bundled her in without ceremony. In another minute, too embarrassed even to think, she was on her way a second time to Hartley Harland. Her fate was out of her own hands: she could only float on the tide.

After they had gone some way John leant back and said to her, 'I've told Uncle George we're still only picnic-ing. We haven't,' he added to his uncle, 'reopened the house again yet.'

'No matter,' muttered Uncle George; 'I'll not be staying. But it's time you did.'

'Yes, but there's the deuce of a lot to see to and settle first.'

Cecilia sank back among the cushions, wondering at the strangeness that had enveloped her, remembering most of all John's 'awfully sorry,' and that he had been for passing her by. In sympathy or in distaste? Ah, which? There was all the world between the two. She had come to no conclusion when the car turned past a lodge into a long avenue of trees and, sweeping rapidly up the rise, swung to that side of the long, low, many-gabled house that she had never seen. Hartley Harland from the west! More stately, more eloquent than from the terraces and garden—and all unknown to her now revisiting it as its presumed mistress: the humour was bitter indeed.

The instant the car came to a standstill John leapt out, ran up the curved flight of steps, and, opening the massive, old, nail-studded oak door, disappeared within. Uncle George leant back in his seat and looked up with great contentment at the rooks cawing lustily in the tall trees near.

'Wonderful old place,' he remarked half to himself. 'Gad, how that sound takes me back!'

Reminiscence was to be prized; it could be used to avert questioning, thought Cecilia very inaccurately. Aloud she said, 'Were you here much as a boy, Uncle George?'

'Knew every stick and stone of it,' he rejoined, 'and do still. That's why I didn't mean to come till I ran into John.'

'I should have thought——' she began.

‘—that that would have brought me over, anyway?’ he finished for her. ‘Yes, but that’s just it. I’m too fond of the place. Look at that window! Perfect! Best bit of Elizabethan work in the county, and it’s all like that. I haven’t been able to come near it for ages. First, that rotten young fool, and then you.’

‘I beg your pardon!’ exclaimed Cecilia indignantly.

‘That’s all right,’ rejoined Uncle George, grinning. ‘I’d only seen you at the wedding and that doesn’t count. Every one’s an angel at the altar. What have you been up to?’

‘I’m sure I’ve no idea——’

‘Emily said you hadn’t been here, not to Hartley Harland! That was queer, that meant something. You are here, so she’s wrong for once. And you’re better looking than ever, better than any one’s any right to be in these immoral days——’

At this point, to Cecilia’s relief, John reappeared in the great doorway, together with a stocky, pleasant-faced manservant whom he instantly introduced. ‘You remember Curtis, Uncle George? With me all through the war. He and his wife are looking after us just whilst we’re here this time, and very well too, aren’t they, Cecilia?’

Cecilia nodded, speechlessly grateful both for his resource and for the perfectly unsurprised look with which Curtis received her, a splendour of respectful intelligence that spoke volumes for his faith in his master. Somehow John was contriving to carry off a situation that had seemed to her vaguely incredible as she was being whirled resistlessly towards it. But search him as she would whenever his eyes were not upon her, she could not distinguish whether his attitude towards her was based on mockery or on respect. Was he preserving her credit or indulging his sense of revenge?

She got out of the car, followed by Uncle George, and went up the steps. Even in that intensely difficult moment she could recognize in wonder that she was setting foot in her husband’s great old home for the first time. Uncle George was talking away beside her, but she hardly heard him: her eyes were given in part to John, in part to Hartley Harland.

‘Why in the world aren’t you keeping open house here yet?’ she was forced to hear Uncle George ask as they entered the big hall.

‘Only three months married,’ John said gaily in answer: ‘plenty of time yet.’

She let the two men talk: she stood and looked round her, trying to observe whilst seeming to be at home. The hall was panelled in oak and facing her was a huge stone fireplace, with ingle-nooks, old scroll-work and quaintly chased fire-dogs on which big logs smouldered: the Harland arms were carved above it. On the walls on each side, severe in armour, debonair in lace, generations of her husband's ancestors looked down upon the comedy of her appearance amongst them. Kind faces, severe and sarcastic faces, mostly of men with here and there a dame powdered, beflounced, stiff in farthingale or graceful in crinoline. It oppressed her, this hall that had seen so much: in other circumstances it might have smiled a welcome. She moved uneasily, and heard John immediately say, 'Come into the little smoking-room: it's cosier there.'

'I'll just wash my hands,' exclaimed Uncle George, 'and then lunch.'

'You know your way,' said John, smiling.

'I do, my boy, but no secrets with this young woman behind my back. You come with me.'

John could not but assent. He gave Cecilia as he passed a cautioning glance, running his hand across his lips in a way seemingly casual but full of significance to her, and she was left alone. Uncle George might know his way: she assuredly did not. She was standing wondering which could be the 'little smoking-room,' when Curtis reappeared. He went at once across the hall to a door beneath the great curve of the wide stone stairs. 'This way, my lady,' he said quietly.

Cecilia gave him a keen look: his face as he opened the door for her expressed nothing. 'Thank you, Curtis,' she said simply.

'It's a pleasure, my lady,' he replied: 'the dining-room's there.' He pointed down the hall and went in the direction indicated himself.

John hurried back through the hall: seeing Cecilia standing irresolutely, he broke into a quiet chuckle and remarked casually, 'The dear old boy's an admiral, that's to say one of the most obstinate set of men on earth: what he wants to do he does, and what he wants to believe he believes. Pure waste of time trying to argue with him, only makes him worse.'

'Or you wouldn't have let him bring me here?' she queried instantly.

'I imagine,' he answered very quietly, 'that it's a visit that gives more pleasure to me than to you.'

'John——' she began with nervous earnestness. But further opportunity for private speech was denied her. Uncle George's voice broke in upon them, calling the same word. 'John!' called Uncle George. 'Where have you got to? 'Pon my word, I'm glad to live in a cottage: no hiding-places there.'

He stumped in upon them, rubbing his hands. 'Ah, there you are! And now what about a bit of lunch?'

'It'll be ready in one minute, Sir George,' said Curtis's respectful tones.

'Good, good. And I expect you'll be all the better for it too, young woman. You ought to be hungry even if you aren't. No food, no children, that's as good a motto as most, eh? And now I want to hear all about it. Fire away.'

'There's nothing to tell,' stammered Cecilia.

'Rubbish, that won't do for me. I haven't come all these miles out of my way for that. Emily will have it there's something wrong: now let's have it straight, is there?'

'Do you take your opinions from Aunt Emily, Uncle George, or do you form your own?' inquired John innocently.

'Damn it,' exploded Uncle George, 'what d'you mean? I don't take my opinions from any one. All the same Emily's a wonderful nose, quite the best in the family.'

'No, no,' cried John, 'I can't agree to that. Cecilia's is, easily.'

'I'm speaking of scent, not shape,' retorted Uncle George testily. 'Cecilia's is her one weak point, too small entirely. But that's not the point. Out with it.'

'You said yourself,' said Cecilia bravely, 'that marriage evidently agreed with me.'

'With you, yes, but what about John? There's a something about him I don't——'

Uncle George's doubts were cut short by Curtis's announcement of lunch: he broke off and turned down the hall towards the dining-room with the frank eagerness of a man with hunger and a healthy digestion. Cecilia's eyes met John's appealingly: to sit through lunch undergoing inquisition was impossible. Before she could act he was at her side.

'Clear out,' he whispered. 'I'm a better liar alone.'

'Come on, Cecilia,' boomed Uncle George from the dining-room door. 'I'm hungry.'

'I—I—I'm not very well,' she stammered. 'I'm feeling rather sick. Begin without me.'

A sly grin of genial understanding came unexpectedly to wreath the old sailor's face, replacing his impatience. He came forward again and patted Cecilia's shoulder. 'Good girl,' he said. 'That's the best bit of news I've heard this year. That's what the old place wants. Take care of yourself: don't mind me. By Gad,' he added, turning to John with a chuckle, 'if that isn't one in the eye for Emily——' He ended in a laugh that rumbled itself genially into silence.

Cecilia, her cheeks flaming, made for the nearest door. Her eyes, drawn involuntarily, irresistibly, met John's: to her relief and indignation his were dancing with suppressed glee. Then she ran. She found herself in the great, darkened drawing-room where the furniture grimaced at her in queer, draped shapes. A streak of light penetrated through the shutters and drew her instantly: in another minute she had wrenched one open, letting in a golden shaft, opened the window and, sliding herself dexterously out, jumped down on to the flagged path that ran along outside. She was now on the side of the house where she had been on her previous visit, and her way lay remembered before her. As before, she fled away, down the terraces, across the garden and the great field until she was a second time in the shelter of the rising wood. There, among the first few primroses under the swollen buds, she flung herself down on a fallen log to rest and regain her breath.

Presently she took out the sandwiches with which she had been provided and began her lunch. Thinking of the lunch she had deserted, remembering John's words and look, first, his 'awfully sorry,' then his imagining that the visit gave him more pleasure than her, then his whispered 'clear out' and finally his gleeful acceptance of Uncle George's misconception, all of a sudden and almost unaware, she laughed quietly aloud, to the indignant surprise of an inquisitive robin, and then, equally suddenly, burst into tears.

(To be continued.)

PERSIAN LEGENDS.

IV.

THE Mirza's business in life was that of a public letter-writer. He sat all day in a small dark recess in the outer wall of the court of the great mosque in Hamadan, and there he drew up legal documents of every kind and contracts of marriage or divorce for such clients as came along.

'When they come to marry I encourage them,' said he. 'And when they divorce I give them good advice. But it is not much use,' he added.

Sometimes, divorces being rather frequent in Hamadan, he would say that he was tired of giving good advice—in a bad world; and the word *bad*, the same in Persian and English, had a peculiar force in the Mirza's mouth, as if he had discovered in it a new and painful meaning of his own.

Usually he was a little late, and would step briskly through the garden with his book of canon law wrapped in a napkin and his cloak billowing out beneath the white neatness of his turban like the russet sails of fishing boats filled by a sunset breeze when they make for their Adriatic harbours. Even so would he sail up, his henna'd beard the same sunset colour; his whole bearing showing by its gravity the estimation in which he held himself. His turban was spotless. He had a special permit to wear it from the Governor of Hamadan. It was a symbol of the things now passing, a flag planted above the 'badness' of the world; and as such he regarded it. On the very first evening of our acquaintance, and immediately after the first important question of fees had been adjusted, he asked me whether I would prefer my teacher to come in a turban or in the new Pahlevi hat, and my choice was the beginning of our friendship.

On one particular evening, however, it was I who was late, having been detained by a surprising sight in Hamadan high street, which was decorated for the Shah's anniversary. The carpets were hung out, the gramophones were going full blast, and the little tight bouquets which the Persians love ornamented

everything, from the horses' tails to the sour milk in its peacock-blue bowls on the stalls.

But the pictures arrested me. Everyone had hung out whatever he had on either side of his front door, and the street from one end to the other was bright with mid-Victorian oleographs. I walked along fascinated, recognising one after the other the friends of my childhood: the Seven Ages of Man, and the plump lady in a bustle who holds a dove to her breast; Othello and the Babes in the Wood and the Happy Family, with Papa in a check hunting suit and whiskers, and a German schloss in the background; crowned heads of all descriptions, since abdicated or dead; and children without number in pink frocks stiff as their bouquets; and the Two Princes in the Tower; and Life among the Laplanders. I could hardly tear myself away, and finally hurrying back past Avicenna's tomb, I found the Mirza already seated in the garden, with his hands folded inside his sleeves, in meditation by the long tank where the petals of apricot blossom float on their own reflections in the water.

'Man is a creature of hurry,' said the Mirza when I had apologised. 'I will tell you the story, for it deals with our father Adam.'

He pulled out his glasses and put them on in a manner which showed that there are some exceptions to the general haste of mankind, and then proceeded with his tale.

'The writing has come down that Adam was moulded out of mud by the angels, and then he lay for two hundred years, before God called to the spirit to enter into him. And the spirit entered in at his head. And when it reached his eyes, they saw. And when it reached his nose, it smelt. And when it reached his ears and his mouth, they heard and tasted. But when it reached his heart, and it began to feel, it could not understand that the rest of him was not yet alive, and he tried to sit up and fell back. And when the spirit reached his waist, again he tried to sit up, and fell back. And God said: "Man is a creature of hurry."

'Then Eve was created out of the three ribs of Adam, and when he saw her, he called to her to come to him. But God said: "It thou makest her come to thee, it will be the woman who will choose her man for ever after; but if thou goest to her this once, man will for ever choose his woman." And so Adam went up to Eve, and took her for his wife.

'And when they were chased from Paradise, Adam wept for twenty years: but after that he was hungry. And Gabriel brought

him wheat from heaven. Then Adam began to eat. But God said: "It is not eaten so."

'Then Gabriel brought a mill, and they ground the wheat to flour and Adam ate it. But God said: "It is not eaten so."

'Then the writing has reached us that Gabriel taught Adam to mix the leaven and make dough; and Adam ate it. But God said: "It is not eaten so."

'Then Gabriel brought an oven, and they baked the bread; and Adam ate it and it was still hot, and burnt his mouth. And God said: "Be patient. Man is a creature of hurry."

'The Flood also,' continued Mirza Hussein, 'came out of an oven. For the Flood began in Kufa, which was the first of all towns as it will be the last in the day of the Imam; and that is why the Presence the Amir (Ali) chose it above all other places. And no doubt you have seen how the wall of the mosque there is aslant, for it bowed down at the passing of our lord Ali's funeral, and has remained so ever since.

'But as for Noah and the Flood,' said the Mirza recovering from the intense earnestness with which he always spoke of his Amir, 'Noah was not his real name at all, but a nickname given him because he wept so long over the sins of mankind. And his real name was 'Abd al- 'Affar, which is to say the Slave of the Forgiver.

'And when he saw that no one would help him with the building of his ship, he prayed and asked God what he should do. And God told him to collect an adze, and all the necessary tools, and to tell the people of Kufa that every chip of wood they cut with the tools would turn to pure gold. And the people came to see, and the chips of wood turned to gold as they were cut, and they carried them home (and God did not mind, for they were all soon to be destroyed), and Noah had as many helpers as he could desire.

'When the ship was built and all was ready, God told Noah's wife to bake some bread for the voyage; and Noah's oven stood where the mosque is now. But when Noah's wife went to light the fire inside the oven, she saw water gushing out of a hole in the bottom, and she said: "What can I do?" And God said to her: "Take a handful of mud and stop up the hole, and bake the bread; but when thou hast finished let the hole be opened once more." And Noah's wife did so, and when she had finished she opened the hole again and the water rushed out and met the rain

which poured from heaven, and the Flood came and all men except Noah and his family were drowned. And even of these one was drowned, for Noah's son Can'an refused to enter the ship, and they say he climbed to the top of Elvand to escape the rising waters, and was finally drowned up there. And that is what the poet means when he says that the obedient dog fares well (for he followed the Seven Sleepers of the Cave and will be pulled into Paradise in the place of 'Ayesha the Prophet's wife who at the last will be pushed back into Hell to make room even for the dog), but the Prophet's son who disobeyed came to a bad end.

'Every kind of animal was in the ship except the cat, which did not then exist. But the mice multiplied and spread everywhere, and no place was free from them, and at last Noah prayed to God and asked how he might get rid of them. And God said: "Pass thy hand over the lion's mouth, and a small lion will leap out and kill the mice." And that is how the cat came to be created.

'When the water sank, no trees were left alive in the world, and Gabriel brought new ones from Behesht and Noah planted them.

'Among others Gabriel brought the vine.

'But when Noah had planted it, Satan came and pulled it up. And Noah saw it lying half-faded on the ground, and planted it again: and again Satan pulled it up. And this happened three or four times, until at last Noah asked Satan the reason and why he so treated the vine.

'Satan said: "I wish for my portion in it."

'Then Noah asked leave of God, and a portion of the vine was granted to Satan, and he keeps it to this day.'

V.

Mirza Hussein had once suggested to the missionaries that he might become a Christian.

The proposal seems to have been rather coldly received, and balancing the probable advantages of conversion against those of his actual condition as a Moslem scribe, he must have come to the conclusion that it would not pay. He told me about it with a calm positiveness of faith which made any small concession of apostacy for the sake of one's worldly necessities a matter of indifference to him.

I think it must have been this attitude which also gave him

his remarkable dignity amid the rather sordid gymnastics made necessary by poverty and the natural wish to place himself favourably in the eyes of anyone who might under any conceivable circumstance be useful to him.

It was amusing to watch him with the Chief of Police, who fed at our inn and had no use for insects such as scribes, and would stand in the garden path, with black top-boots apart to support the massive weight of khaki up above, with the lion of Persia on his brown kolbak pushed back—for it began to be warm—so that it stood passant over an expanse of baldness, and in this position would look down on the little Mirza from all the altitude of Ignorance in power, while the Man of Letters, pouring his longest adjectives in an effusive stream and curling himself half-over in his anxiety to please, yet managed to give the impression that Mirza Hussein, who knew the Quran and the Traditions, was infinitely the superior of the two.

‘It is terrible to have many small debts,’ he said to me one day with a tired air.

He looked at me as if weighing possibilities.

‘Do you know Mr. L.?’ he asked presently. ‘He is a friend of mine; he thinks very highly of me. He was in the Bank. Now he is in London in a very important position. When he was here in Hamadan I went to his office one day and told him that I had a debt of fifty tomans.’ The Mirza looked at me again, one rapid glance over the edge of his spectacles. ‘Mr. L. said nothing for a long time. He sat looking down at the papers on his desk like this,’ proceeded the Mirza, striking the attitude of an embarrassed Englishman to the life. ‘Then he said he would give me fifty tomans if I would sign him a paper on my house.’ Mirza Hussein looked at me again, still weighing possibilities, but rather less hopefully I thought.

‘It is always useful to have a friend in a bank,’ said I, keeping to the abstract.

‘I paid it all back,’ concluded the Mirza. ‘A little every week.’ There was a pause.

‘If he were here now I would go to him. The Persians do not lend money. There is no longer any religion in this land.’

‘In Europe also,’ said I, ‘lending is rare and repayment even more so.’

The Mirza gave in gracefully, with a touch of respectful regard due to polite people who nevertheless resist deception.

'Justice is necessary in the world,' said he. 'Shah Nushirvan was a just man, and though being an unbeliever he has had to go to Hell, yet his justice turned itself into a fan in his hand, so that he fans the flames to this side and that and they cannot touch him.'

'In his day all had access to him. A long chain hung down to the four cross-roads below his palace and anyone rich or poor could pull at the chain and ring a bell in the Shah's bedroom, and the Shah himself would come down to hear the complaint.'

'One day a snake rang the bell. Nushirvan looked out of his window, but he saw no one and went back again.'

'Then the snake rang again, and again Nushirvan looked out, and he saw it where it had curled itself round the chain. So he went down, and the snake slid away in the dust, and Nushirvan followed till they came to a well. And the snake crept down along the wall of the well till it came to a big hole: and Nushirvan saw that all its brood of small snakes was inside the hole, but a scorpion sat on the edge. Then Nushirvan killed the scorpion, and the snake was able to go in to its little ones. And after a few days, in its gratitude, it brought some grains of Sweet Basil seed to Nushirvan to cure him of headaches; for Sweet Basil had been unknown in Persia before.'

'But there is no Nushirvan now,' said the Mirza. 'And indeed the Just are not approved of, for they differ too much from their governors, and they have been growing more scarce ever since the days of Abraham.'

Mirza Hussein and I had first discovered each other over the story of Abraham. I had come across it in travellers' books, and then I had heard it in the Shammar tents from Sheich Humeidi of Balad, when I was staying with his nephew Sheich 'Ajil. And when I made some casual reference to one of the traditional episodes, Mirza Hussein looked up in surprise from our Persian grammar and asked me if I was indeed interested in these 'matters of learning.'

'I know all the stories,' said he. 'But missionaries are mostly taken up with trifles, and I do not discuss things with them. With you it is different; you come to study.'

'I should like to hear the story of Abraham,' said I: 'for I know about his childhood, when he was hidden in the cave and fed himself by sucking milk and honey from his own finger-tips, and how he came to destroy the images of his father the maker

of idols, and to believe in the one God : but of his later life I know only that which is written in our own traditions.'

'And that is very inadequate,' said the Mirza, with a note of contempt which he was usually careful to hide. 'Ours is the complete story, and it is mentioned in the Quran, where as you know you can find the root of everything that exists. That is why we honour it, and when we move into a new house we take over the Quran before any other furniture, together with a jug of water, for that is the giver of life, and a mirror, which is like an eye in the house, and some bit of greenery.

'But as for Abraham, you know that after marrying Sarah he travelled with her into the lands of Damascus. She was so beautiful that he was afraid, and he made her travel in a big box with holes in it to see and breathe through, and when anyone approached he would lower a curtain over these holes so that she might be hidden.

'They reached the borders of a certain kingdom which lay upon their road, and the Shah rode up to collect his dues in taxes before he would let them take their flocks through his land ; and when their dues were paid and the flocks were going by, he saw the big box and asked to know what was inside it.

"I will give thee a third of my goods," said Abraham, "but do not seek to look into the box."

'The Shah thought there must be something very precious since Abraham was so anxious, and insisted on seeing.

"I will give thee half my goods," said Abraham, "if thou wilt not look."

'But the Shah still insisted.

'Then Abraham said : "I will give thee all my goods, my flocks and my herds." But the Shah refused, and he opened the box, and when he saw Sarah and her loveliness he asked : "Who is this ?"

'Then Abraham said : "My sister." ('For she was his sister in religion,' commented Mirza Hussein, the casuist.)

'Then the Shah stretched forth his hand to pull her out of the box, and Abraham was angry and turned his head away not to see, and the Shah's arm withered up to the elbow and beyond.

'The Shah perceived that Abraham must be a man of importance, and he asked him to restore his arm. And Abraham prayed, and the arm was made whole. But when the Shah saw the beauty of Sarah he again stretched forth his hand, and again Abraham

turned his head to one side and the arm withered. And again Abraham made it whole. And the Shah looked at Sarah, and for the third time he put out his hand, and Abraham turned away, and the Shah's hand withered.

'Then the Shah said : "Make it whole again, and I will leave thee thy sister."

'And Abraham prayed and said : "Lord, if he is sincere, let his arm be made whole." And the Shah meant what he said, and the arm was healed.

'Then the Shah took Abraham through his land, and wished to honour him and said : "Go thou ahead, preceding me."

'But Abraham said : "If I go first, and thou after, through thine own land, thy people will think meanly of thee, and thou wilt have trouble with them afterwards because of me who am but a passer-by. Therefore do thou go first and I will follow."

'And they did so, and when Abraham left him, the Shah gave his own daughter Hagar to Sarah as a present. And Sarah, having no son, gave Hagar to Abraham, and thus Ishmael was born.

'Now when Sarah grew jealous, and begged Abraham to drive Hagar and Ishmael away, God commanded him to take them and leave them in a place where no seed had ever been sown. And Abraham was troubled at the thought of leaving his son to die. But God said : "Do not fear ; for I will care for him."

'So Abraham mounted a donkey, and put Hagar and Ishmael in front of him, and the ground turned itself over under the donkey's feet so that they very soon came to the desert which is now Mecca, where no seed had ever been sown. And here Abraham left Hagar between the two-hills of Safa and Marwa.

'And Ishmael was thirsty. And Hagar ran to Safa to look for water, and found none ; then she descended and ran to Mina and found none. And she made this journey seven times.

'Then she returned to Ishmael, and found that in the agony of his thirst the boy had been rubbing the ground with his heel and a spring of water was welling up in the hole that he had made.

'Hagar feared it would run away and be lost in the sand, and she quickly brought mud and stones to build a well round it, and as she built she said : "Zem, Zem," which means "stay" : and the water stayed. If she had not said these words it would all have oozed away and been lost. And that is the well Zemzem in Mecca to-day, and it was sweeter than all the other waters of the world, even Euphrates. But because it was proud and boasted,

God put into it a little bitter taste like salt, and it has it even now, and I have tasted it.

'Now when the birds and beasts saw water far away, they gathered round it. And the distant Arabs of the Jerham tribe saw the movements of the birds and followed them, and were astonished to find a woman with her child in the desert, by the well of water.

'And every day the ground would turn itself over under the feet of Abraham's donkey and he would bring food : or sometimes Gabriel would come. And God commanded some of the fertile land of Damascus and it moved and transported itself and went seven times round the place where the Ka'aba was to be and then settled in the district of Taif (which means a going round in a circle), and fruit and greens and all good things have been produced there for the Meccans ever since.

'Then the Jerham tribe asked permission to settle and use the water, and Hagar said : " I must ask Abraham when he comes." And Abraham gave permission—and the Jerham settled there.

'And Ishmael, because he was a prophet's son, grew a month's growth in every week, and became a man, and married a woman from the Jerham. And Hagar died.

'Abraham came one day to see his son, and he was away hunting, for he was a great hunter, and only his wife was at home. She was a foolish woman of no understanding, and did not ask him to come into the tent. And he went away leaving a message for Ishmael to say that an old man had come to greet him and that the threshold of his house was built for stumbling and should be changed.

'When Ishmael came home, he smelt the smell of his father, and he asked his wife and she said to him : " An old man came, and I did not ask him into the tent, and he left a message of greeting for thee, and said that thou shouldst change the threshold of thy house, because it is built for stumbling." Then Ishmael understood, and divorced his wife.

'And he married another woman of the tribe, and again when he was hunting Abraham came riding on his ass. And the woman was wise, and she told him that Ishmael would soon return, and bade him come into the tent. But Abraham could not enter, for he had promised Sarah that he would not descend from his ass.

'Then the woman said : " I will bring water out to thee, and

wash thee so that thou mayest be refreshed after thy travel." And she brought the water, and so that he might not touch the ground and break his promise to Sarah, Abraham put one foot on a big stone and Ishmael's wife washed that side; then she took the stone round to the other side of the donkey, and Abraham put his other foot on it, and Ishmael's wife washed his other side also, and the marks of his feet on the stone are still there in the square of the Ka'aba at a place where pilgrims stop to pray.

'Then Abraham left a message for Ishmael, telling him to love and cherish the threshold of his house, and Ishmael lived contentedly with his wife for a long time.

'Afterwards he and Abraham built the Ka'aba, and the angels helped them, and the hills were commanded to roll down their stones for the building. The hill 'Arafat complained, for it was a long way; and God ordained a recompense for this hill and commanded that every pilgrim should camp upon it from noon to sunrise, and this we still do, or otherwise our pilgrimage is valueless.

'And when the House was built, God told Abraham to call men to prayer. But he said: "How shall I make them hear?" And even as he spoke, a hill began to spring up under his feet and lifted him so that he stood high up over the world, and he called people to pray, and the call pierced through the backs of men and through the bosoms of women, and all who heard and answered "labbeik, at thy command, oh Lord," came to Mecca: and as often as they had said labbeik, so often did they perform the pilgrimage. And they all returned safely to their homes. And I,' said the Mirza, 'have been twice.

'Then Gabriel stood on the hill and called, and as many as heard him and answered, also came safely to Mecca, and died in holiness on the way of their return.

'Then Satan stood upon the hill, and he called, and many heard him and answered: and they also came to Mecca and reached it in safety and returned in safety to their homes; but after that they took to evil paths and were lost.'

The Mirza then told me about Isaac, in whom the Arabs are naturally not so much interested. The story was so like our own version that it is not worth repeating except for one genuine and charming Beduin touch. It seems that when the angels came as guests ('They can take on any form,' says Mirza Hussein, 'except that of a pig or a dog'), there was nothing in the tents to offer them except one little calf which Sarah, being sorrowful and child-

less, had kept as a pet of her own. And so they killed the calf and gave it to their guests, because it was the best thing they had.

VI.

Mirza Hussein was very poor. During the heavy April showers the roof of his small rabbit hutch of a house fell in.

The roofs in Hamadan are mud, plastered and rolled and, in springtime, covered deep in feathery white flowers that dance in the wind. When they collapse, however, the house is, as it were, smothered in its own garden plot, and I wondered what happened to the Mirza's never-mentioned wife who was supposed to live inside (washing his turbans, I imagined).

He himself lost nearly a week, first collecting two beams for a new roof, then finding men with donkeys who had a little time to spare for the conveying of mud and straw and faggots; and finally when all was provided, entering into negotiations with a mason. I helped a little in this crisis, and Mirza Hussein took my small offering with the same admirable dignity with which he had accepted former defeats; his manner relegated these matters to the unimportant limbo of transitory things.

'The Presence, the Amir,' he said, reaching his favourite subject and forgetting the day's vexations, the meagre supper of lettuce and sour milk eaten beneath a dripping roof, and all the difficulties of living in this ephemeral world; 'the Presence the Amir was beset and surrounded by enemies when he dwelt in Kufa. One day three thousand men conspired to kill him when he bent to put his forehead to the ground in the great mosque on Friday (for it was a very large building and is so yet, though not as great as Mecca, which holds one hundred thousand men at prayer). All the conspirators went, and each took his sword beneath his cloak and they waited till Ali put his forehead to the ground in praise of God, the Exalted. Then they drew their swords, and lo—they held in their hands only the hilts; the blades were not there. Then they went shamefaced home.

'But one of his friends asked Ali what had become of the swords.

"Go thou," said the Presence, the Amir, "early to-morrow morning till thou meet a caravan outside the city gates. Tell the master to hand it over to thee, and bring it to the Maidan."

'And the man did as he was told, and outside the city gate he

met a caravan, and the master of the caravan riding at the head of it on an ass : and this was an angel disguised. And when Ali's friend spoke, the angel handed him the leading-rope and vanished.

'Then Ali's friend brought the caravan to the Maidan, where Ali himself and all the men of Kufa were gathered. And they unloaded the bales there on to the ground and opened them, and spread out what was inside, and behold—the blades of three thousand swords.

'Ali said : "We will sell them."

'They put them up for sale, and the three thousand conspirators came to buy each his own sword blade, and the Presence, the Amir, gave all that money to the poor. The generous man is honoured.

'And as for those who give,' said the Mirza ; 'they do good to their own hearts. But as for misers and gossipers and those who ill-treat their parents, there is a writing above the gates of Paradise to say that they shall be excluded.'

'Now, if your Presence will command me to take my leave, the call for prayer has sounded.'

THARAYA.

SPARROWFIELD STORIES.

BY F. H. DORSET.

V. KINGS AND THEIR ARMIES.

THE fact that Mr. Thomas Purple lives at 'Sandringham,' Royal Road, Sparrowfield, has never succeeded in turning him into a really loyal subject of the Crown. Mr. Purple is Red, although his immediate family, who ought to have known him better, have always mistaken him for nothing more potent than a Socialist whose political convictions are deeply Pink. Therefore the daughter and son-in-law with whom he dwells, and the police who recently arrested the hitherto orderly little man, and the Magistrate who fined him and made him pay Murphy O'Flynn's hospital expenses without O'Flynn's proceeding to an action for damages, have never truly fathomed the reason of the astonishing eruption which nearly blew the Sandringham household in twain and startled the quiet firmament of Sparrowfield almost on the eve of the General Election. Moreover, Mr. Purple himself has never ceased to be bewildered when considering that Friday night in retrospect, and therefore has held his peace concerning his real defence and allowed Sparrowfield and his family to imagine that he, a life-long teetotaller and non-smoker, a quiet absorber of inflammable literature but not of alcoholic liquor, was drunk. It is better, after all, to be considered drunk than mad, and besides . . . the evidence. . . . Between the whisky bottle and Murphy O'Flynn's head there was evidence enough to have condemned Pussyfoot Johnson himself.

When the New Suburb was a-building, it spread out with one wing joined genteelly to a Residential quarter of the Old Suburb and the other linked to the spot where a Jam Factory had been lately opened. Once, when the street leading to the factory was almost a country road, Royalty had driven down it *en route* to inspect the factory and its ideal conditions, and in commemoration thereof the way had immediately been labelled 'Royal Road.' Shortly afterwards two rows of little red houses sprang into being, and certain migrants bearing with them remnants of Victorian tradition named their six-roomed dwellings 'Balmoral,' 'Sandringham,' and the

like. The tenants of 'Sandringham,' however, melted from the scene one night with a quantity of hire-purchased furniture upon which two instalments had been paid, much to the annoyance of Everyman's Furnishing Co. and were succeeded in the tenancy by Mr. Purple's daughter and her husband, ex-Sergeant Bone, now a foreman at the Jam Factory and doing quite well for himself. It may here be remarked that almost every household in Royal Road contains some member who earns his bread by the making or distribution of jam. The factory may stand clear of the suburb by the width of a field, but there is no disputing that it is there, and that its morning, midday, and evening 'hooters' ruffle the calm of Sparrowfield's Right Wing extremely. It has never, however, employed Mr. Purple, for he retired from the occupation of tailoring on his savings and a legacy some three years ago, and came to board as a widower with his only child, although he had never quite forgiven her for marrying a soldier of the Regular Army during the first year of the Great War.

Mr. Purple has been unkindly treated by nature, who endowed him originally with hair of such fiery hue that for the sake of peace, when he left school and became a tailor's apprentice, he dyed it black. Even then the results were rusty, and to-day, at sixty-odd, his thick locks are badger-like and strangely streaked. Nothing effective could be done, however, about the shortness of his legs, which have always, combined with the length of his arms and his body, endowed him with the air of a caricature. His youth was largely passed amid humiliations and resentments, underpayment, and sordid surroundings in the neighbourhood of White-chapel, so perhaps it is not remarkable that he should early have been possessed by a sense of personal and social grievance, and have become the fervent disciple of Karl Marx. But a large placid wife with a little money of her own espoused him and produced their daughter Queenie, and during her lifetime Mr. Purple's politics smouldered in abeyance. He voted Socialist and devoured pamphlets, but gained no speaking-part on any platform, until the War brought him forward in his immediate circle as an eloquent Pacifist. Whereupon Queenie went and married Sergeant Bone.

The turmoil of war subsided at last into the confusion of peace, and Sergeant Bone, miraculously surviving, gained a small pension and a job in the Jam Factory. Mrs. Purple died, and her husband suddenly found himself a capitalist, with the safe and certain income of three pounds a week, but in momentary danger of unholy matri-

mony with an earnest revolutionary of half his own age and twice his ambition, who proposed a Trial Marriage upon Soviet lines from which his inherently respectable mind recoiled in horror. He fled to Sparrowfield, where the safe shadow of the deceased Connie seemed to linger in the person of her daughter, and there he remained, a permanent paying guest who gave little trouble and whose Socialistic hobbies received mild sympathy from many of the neighbours. When the General Election dawned pinkly upon the horizon the Socialist Candidate was made aware of the existence of Thomas Purple, and found a use for him as a canvasser and distributor of literature. Thomas was happy. The fresh air of Sparrowfield combined with release from endless tailoring had rejuvenated him. His mind was free from care, his body was at ease, and his time was his own. He flung mind, body and time into his candidate's service, and when not occupied in some capacity at Socialist meetings he attended impartially Liberal and Conservative gatherings, and asked questions, and was tactfully handled by chairmen, and became known to his cause as a useful heckler. Sergeant and Mrs. Bone kept their uncertain political opinions to themselves, and in the language of Mrs. Bone 'let him play.' His energies had been safely diverted into a respectable channel, and were more or less divested of the odd foreign element which had always distressed his wife. It was quite the thing now to be a pacifist, and Russia seemed farther off than it had appeared in Whitechapel. Let Dad alone and he'd play for hours and keep out of the way, reasoned the sensible Queenie.

The General Election loomed nearer and nearer. Sergeant Bone refused to be drawn on the subject of his vote, and Mr. Purple gave up worrying him. After all, there were more important fish to fry than Sergeant Bone or Queenie, and it was restful to return from the excited controversy of political meetings into an enclosure of domestic peace. Besides, there are wheels within wheels in most matters, and even the Socialist candidate was ignorant of the fact that Thomas Purple was a member of The Society of Liberators; a club of whose branch existence in Sparrowfield the police were blissfully unaware. There were twelve Liberators in Sparrowfield, all members of various political organisations, and their monthly meetings had the glamour and spice of romance deep-dyed in crimson. Ostensibly meeting in the service of one Cause they worked in truth for another, the permanent downfall of Kings, Armies, and Navies and the enrolment of Proletarian

Forces. A great deal of intoxicating discussion and exchange of sentiment took place at these meetings of the Sparrowfield Branch of the 'Liberators,' and Mr. Purple always left them in a condition of suppressed mental excitement. It elated him to think of the stupendous truth that one day, when Crown and Throne should crash and Utopias arise upon their ruins, he, Thomas Purple, should have been one of the patient underground moles whose activities brought about that desired event; and the roots of that elation, unknown to himself, had a strange origin. They sprang out of a far-off forgotten childhood devotion to Bonnie Prince Charlie and a certain breath-taking romance of the '45, bought for threepence second-hand off a bookstall and laboriously devoured between spasms of schooling, in the days when long words had to be spelt out syllabically and the vexed question of Marxian politics had not yet swept aside boyhood's illusion. That book had bristled with secret meetings, with plottings against the Hanoverian Government, with swords and dirks and skirling bagpipes and healths drunk riotously to 'the King over the water.' It was full of fine, rattling, half-comprehended phrases, it was heady with the atmosphere of conspiracy, and Mr. Purple's subconscious mind had since transferred its glamour from the Stuart Cause of the past to the Soviet of the present. He did not know it, but that precisely was what had happened, and the catastrophe of Fateful Friday was its direct consequence, quite as much as any covert deed of the Scientific Journalist who drank tea with him that afternoon in the Golden Bun; for the circumstances of his early youth had compelled Mr. Purple to nurse his devotion to the Jacobite Cause in secret. He lived in those days in that stratum of dingy respectability which verges on dire poverty. His school companions out of school hours had no playground but the streets and a scrap of waste land where belligerent dandelions and valiant camomile strove to veil rubbish-dumps decently. There was no Boy Scouts organisation to absorb and discipline young energies, and street-gangs abounded, often inspiring terror in the undersized Thomas. His own playfellows cared nothing for historical romance, but divided their literary interests between the Police News and Red Indians. Episodes from the life and death of Charlie Peace and Buffalo Bill were often re-enacted among the tin cans and the dandelions, but Bonnie Prince Charlie was received with derision. Thomas, therefore, was constrained to playing most of the rôles in his favourite dreams by himself, and conducted conspiratorial

meetings alone, or in the sole company of one small girl, in odd corners, where he mouthed marvellous words and plotted deeply against King George II. Then, suddenly, his father's death flung him out of childhood into the welter of bread-winning, and memory of that brief period of vivid imaginative life sank down into the depth of Thomas Purple's subconsciousness and remained there, intact but long forgotten by his working mind. Realisation of social injustice and the publications of the school of Marx and Engels soon absorbed most of his mental interest apart from his daily work, even when the feather-bed weight of Connie hampered his activities. Nevertheless, had he but known it, the peculiar thrill of delight which he always experienced when attending any furtive revolutionary meeting in any secret place was directly due to that suppressed romanticism of his childhood. The Scientific Journalist, when he casually lifted the latch and opened the door between the Subconscious and the Conscious within Thomas Purple, merely released Charles Edward Stuart into the company of Karl Marx, to the dire confusion of the 'Liberators' and of Thomas himself. And of course the Scientific Journalist, the real culprit, had by that time melted away and so escaped scot-free from the consequences of his own experiment. Life is like that.

Mr. Purple encountered him at a small Conservative Public Meeting held on the Friday afternoon, preliminary to a large Public Meeting to be held on an evening of the following week. A travelling Speaker who could only spare one afternoon for Sparrowfield addressed a gathering of such electors as could escape from business or pleasure to listen to him, and as usual Mr. Purple arose in the body of the hall and asked questions. Experience had taught him how to frame them pithily and warily, and the result to-day was a brief duel not without excitement. On sitting down again Mr. Purple noticed that the gentleman seated beside him was taking copious shorthand notes, and appeared to be a reporter. He ventured to speak to him, and on emerging from the hall they repaired together for a cup of tea and a scone to the Golden Bun teashop across the way, the hour being then past five o'clock.

Mr. Purple had been very busy all day until the meeting, canvassing and running various errands. He felt hot and dirty, and had intended returning home, to wash and change his clothes and partake of a knife-and-fork tea before proceeding at seven o'clock to a gathering of the Liberators in the room behind the tailor's shop of Lemuel Goldsnitz in the High Street of the Old Suburb ;

that most respectable business-house which had been a feature of Older Sparrowfield for years. Now he would have to stay his hunger with a snack and afterwards rush home to wash himself before attending the gathering, but the shorthand-writer really seemed to be open for enlightenment. Seated at a green-tiled table for two Mr. Purple ventured to ask him what paper he represented, and learnt with disappointment that he was merely the scientific writer of short articles for a medical journal, 'Chiefly,' said the Scientific Journalist airily, 'of a psychological nature. On the relationship between mind and matter in the human subject, from the therapeutic standpoint, you understand.'

Mr. Purple did not understand. Apparently the chap was some sort of learned crank, and he began to regret his precipitancy in accepting the gentleman's invitation to share a pot of tea, especially when the waitress placed the refreshment and a plate of cakes upon the table and instead of pouring out the fluid for which Thomas Purple thirsted drily he leant across the crockery and continued to talk in a language almost beyond his listener's comprehension.

'I attend public meetings now and then, especially political meetings, in order to gather data for some of my theories,' continued the Scientific Journalist. 'I have for years been engaged in trying to probe into some of the mysteries of the subconscious mind. Have you read Freud at all?'

'No I 'aven't!' said Mr. Purple, a thought irritably. 'Been too busy. 'Ave you read *The Call*?'

'Well,' said the Journalist, ignoring his question, 'I daresay you can do without Freud. However . . . I have a theory which may interest you, as a keen politician, which I observe you to be. I believe that commonly extremists in any direction are subconsciously their own opposites. There is a law of antagonism between the conscious and the subconscious mind, and very often extremists are born from this warfare. The soul conducts battles of which the active mind is hardly aware. Your hot atheist is really a profound deist; your red revolutionary at his soul-roots is a Tory reactionary . . . and vice versa. I speak of extremes, you understand. If one could, I believe, induce Snowden to swallow a drug which could raise his subconscious mind and submerge his conscious, without throwing him into a markedly unnatural condition, he would reveal himself as a Conservative die-hard.'

The Scientific Journalist at last picked up the teapot and poured

out two cups of strong tea while Mr. Purple, staring at him with those red-brown eyes which perpetually give the lie to his dyed hair, expressed his derision in a yap of laughter.

'Mean to say,' he said, 'that I'm a ruddy Tory meself? Why, I've been a Socialist ever since me childhood! Good reason for it, too! Tell you what, the world's changing. Royalty and so on . . . it'll 'ave to go one day. This country's 'ad enough of capitalism and all the rest of it, and you can't make no omelette without breaking eggs. You've got to reconstruct the 'ole system, and you'll 'ave to pull the old one down to do it. It's past patching up. That's what the Tories won't see. They won't budge, and so they'll 'ave to be blasted out of the way. Look 'ere . . .'

The Journalist brooded over the milk jug.

'Perhaps . . .' he said, 'perhaps. . . . D'you take sugar?'

'Thanks. Now these here Tory lies about Russia . . .'

The Journalist nodded absently, and dropped two white sugar-like lumps into the cup which he passed over to his guest. When Mr. Purple had reached the end of his sentence and drunk thirstily of the reviving beverage he spoke thoughtfully.

'You,' he asserted, 'are fundamentally an ardent Royalist; hence your eloquent support of Communism.'

'Well, I'm damned!' said Mr. Purple violently, and passed his cup over for more tea.

Round about the third cup, when the hands of a clock on the wall pointed to ten minutes to six, the Scientific Journalist appeared to be much impressed by the arguments of Mr. Purple. He took out his notebook and made notes. Thomas Purple himself felt greatly refreshed, indeed exalted. He felt on a sudden young and eager, and a change began to creep over his manner of speech, which waxed grandiloquent although still weak in aspirates. He devoured an éclair with relish, although normally it was a type of cake which he abhorred. This filling of his mouth with cream and chocolate temporarily suspended his words, and the flavour of the delicacy surpassed anything which he had tasted for years. It was thirst-creating, however, and once more the Scientific Journalist re-filled his guest's empty cup. Pensive silence fell upon the pair for a few minutes while the Journalist wrote rapidly in his notebook, and Mr. Purple, temporarily oblivious of politics, ate a second éclair and felt running through his veins the restored wine of youth. The sensation, for some reason, did not surprise him. He experienced a strangely familiar sense of jubilant

anticipation, as of one who stands on the threshold of great things, and surging suddenly upon his nostrils, above the odour of tea and chocolate, came the scents of crushed camomile blossom, soot, and sunshine. For a magic moment the tea-shops merged curiously into a square of waste tussocky grass bounded by a railway embankment, and the rumble of traffic without became the roar of a passing train. A lean tabby cat streaking rapidly away among dandelions flashed across the eye of his memory. Cat . . . cat . . . cat . . . He contemplated the beast mentally for some time after its apparition had passed. Why was that cat so important? It was important to somebody, but who on earth . . . Ah! Of course! It was the famous wild cat shot by a starving fugitive in the Scottish Highlands, shot, and skinned, and eaten by him who, rightly, should have sat upon the throne of England and Scotland with varlets to wait upon him. With his own royal hands he had slain and cooked a cat! Shocking intolerable thought! But then there had come to him one Sandy MacTavish, with food and succour and a sharp sword and fifty devout Royalists of the Clan MacTavish; and then the bleak mountain cave whose possession had to be disputed with a wild cat was exchanged for an oak-panelled chamber and the starry light of wax candles; and rags became ruffles of fine lace, and the sharp sword became the King's, touching one lightly, and a pretty woman with white shoulders and wide-sweeping blue skirts was curtsying lower and lower. Was her name Flora or Vi'let? Flora, of course! Vi'let wore a red frock and a pinafore and it was probable that her shoulders, had they been visible, were not white. For all that she had championed him, been loyal . . . hadn't half given the Crickle boy socks for making remarks about Bonnie Prince Charlie. Pity she hadn't been a boy herself.

The eclairs came to an end and once more the tea-room of the Golden Bun impinged upon Mr. Purple's senses. He looked upon it with a dazed eye, and became aware that a little while back he had been conducting an argument with the man on the other side of the table, an argument of which he had inexplicably lost the thread. He groped momentarily in mental darkness, feeling as though he had been passed rapidly through a kaleidoscope and had lost his own pattern, but in the next instant came daylight and with it a sense of purpose, determination, and a thrilled conviction of faith. He emerged from his confusion triumphantly clinging to a burst of eloquence.

'As I said just now,' he stated dogmatically, 'the troubles of this 'ere un'appy land will never be cured until the Usurper is dethroned and the King enjoys 'is own again, all proper and correct.'

'Exactly!' agreed the Journalist. 'I'm afraid that I have to catch a train North, but I trust that we shall meet again some day.' He arose and paid the reckoning at the cashier's desk by the door, and Mr. Purple followed him out on to the pavement in rapt contemplation of his own thoughts. Outside the door of the Golden Bun he halted and bowed ceremoniously. The Scientific Journalist raised his hat and returned the courtesy politely.

'I thank you, sir,' said Mr. Purple, 'for your 'ospitality. It shall not be forgotten.' He stood for a second or two with upraised face, gazing at the furtive clouds now clustering about a fading western glory, and when his attention once more returned to earth his companion had vanished. He turned homeward, walking with a peculiar gait which attracted some notice and which brought him at five minutes past six just level with the bottle-and-jug department of the 'Crown and Thistle,' that ancient lingering inn of the Old Suburb whose beams still reek of history and highwaymen.

Here he halted pensively, while the old sign above his head creaked reminiscently in a wandering breeze. It recalled something to his mind. What was it? Something special that he must buy. . . . Remembering what it was he pushed open the brass-bound swing doors, and, approaching the counter, laid upon it a pound note, and demanded of the young man in charge of the off-licence a bottle of the best Scotch whisky, in accents equally compounded of Scotland and Cockaigne. The young man looked upon him as upon a ghost, recognising in him the most fervid orator of the local Rechabites, and he ventured to make a remark as he counted out the change.

'Why, Mr. Purple,' he protested, 'whatever do you mean to do with that, and you a Teetotal Abstemious!'

Mr. Purple smiled uncomprehendingly. 'Eh?' he said, then, with a faint tinge of mysterious challenge, 'who forbids me to drink the King's 'ealth, I'd like to know? This 'ere bottle is for a Purpose, ye ken!'

The young man drew back, and appeared to be troubled in mind. 'Nobody's interfering with you, sir,' he said. 'I'm sure you're quite at liberty to change your opinions.'

Several regular customers, about to purchase bottled beer, drew nearer and listened to the dialogue with interest. Thomas Purple glanced at them suspiciously, and lowered his voice. 'We are not alone!' he observed darkly, and took his departure, accompanied by a quart or so of 'John Haig.' A buzz of excited comment arose behind him as the door swung to. Was it really possible that Mr. Purple, Socialist and Total Abstainer, tiptoed in secret and was already intoxicated? Here indeed was a tale to be told!

Mr. Purple carried the wrapped bottle beneath his arm and strode briskly through the gathering dusk. There was no bus at the corner, and he had to be washed and changed and attending a Secret Meeting of the Jacobites by seven o'clock. He put his best foot foremost, and entered the front door of 'Sandringham' with half an hour to do it in. His daughter, ironing a few fal-lals in the kitchen against Sunday, heard him run upstairs like a youngster, and burst into song as he changed his clothes. She paused in her operations to listen. The little house of thin walls and doors afforded slight protection from the powerful tunelessness of Mr. Purple's voice. She had once heard him sing the 'Red Flag' with just such gusto, but this was something quite different. She set the kitchen door wide and listened.

'God bless the King—I mean the Faith's Defender!
God bless—no 'arm in blessing—the Pretender!
But 'oo Pretender is, and 'oo the King . . .
God bless us all, that's quite another thing!'

'Well . . .' commented the wife of Sergeant Bone. 'Whatever next?'

Mr. Purple slammed a drawer and changed his song.

'Come boat me o'er, come carry me o'er,
Come boat me o'er to Charlie!
I'll gie John Richards anither bawbee,
I'll gie John Richards anither bawbee,
I'll gie John Richards anither bawbee
To carry me o'er to Charlie!'

'Whatever's up, Dad?' questioned Mrs. Bone, at the foot of the stairs.

'Nothin', nothin'! 'Ere, get me out a wineglass and a corkscrew, there's a good girl!'

'What?'

'You've got 'em in the sideboard. Jack uses 'em, don't he! Well, I wants them, when I comes down.'

Mystified but stung to curiosity his daughter obeyed him, and a moment later he descended, dressed in his best suit and bearing a bottle of whisky. Alarmed, she beheld him pour out a liberal dose into one of the wineglasses intended for the port absorbed by Sergeant Bone on special occasions, and followed him while he carried his bumper into the kitchen, surely to dilute it beneath the tap. Instead he paused by a tub of 'blued' rinsings which had figured in Mrs. Bone's recent laundry operations, passed the glass once over the water, winked at her solemnly, and tossed off the fluid neat. Immediately after, in spite of coughing, he threw the wineglass—one of the best set—over his shoulder and shivered it to fragments. Mrs. Bone came to life from her trance.

'Dad!' she said reproachfully, 'whoever's got you like this, and you a teetotaller all your life?'

A portentous gravity took possession of her father.

'Ah!' he said 'Ah!' And wrapping himself suddenly in an ancient mackintosh cape which hung in the hall and had belonged to his dead wife, he donned a soft cap in silence, drew it low upon his brows, picked up the whisky bottle, and departed by the back gate. Mrs. Bone was overawed in spite of herself. Dad the teetotaller was drunk and dangerous, and her husband was out. She did not quite know how to cope with the situation.

Thomas Purple was profoundly happy. The fact that he boarded a motor-bus and paid a twopenny fare and sat amid men in bowlers and trilbys, and women with artificial silk stockings, no more dispelled for him the romance of attending a meeting of Jacobite conspirators than it would have done had motor-buses been invented fifty years earlier or in the reign of King George the Second. He was released once more into the perfect world of Make Believe, but the Make Believe now bore upon it a peculiar stamp of reality. Fact and fiction had become merged, the clock of history no longer registered, for him, the correct time. The Adult Thomas Purple knew that he belonged to a Secret Society and was on his way to attend one of its local meetings, but that was almost all that the adult Thomas Purple really remembered. The juvenile Thomas of fifty years ago used his eyes and ears and tongue; the Thomas who had quaffed secret potions of Rasp-

berry Vinegar to 'The King over the Water.' The adult Thomas had been in a position to achieve real Scotch whisky, that was all, but he was not intoxicated. Perhaps the Scientific Journalist could have explained why. Thomas sat in a corner of the omnibus nursing his bottle beneath the folds of his eccentric cape in blissful silence. He was not even flushed, although visions indescribable passed swiftly through his brain. He saw armies with banners, white sails scudding upon stormy seas, a town where the bells in many steeples performed the strange motion of 'ringing backwards' and crowds cheered a wonderful Royal figure on horseback wearing the Stuart tartan. He saw the interior of a candle-lit room, men's faces pressed together about himself and that same fair regal figure at whose feet he knelt. He felt the touch of a sword-blade upon his shoulder, heard the magic words accompanying an accolade, and felt his heart surge with love and loyalty. Never should it be said of a MacTavish that he had failed his true King. Never should the Usurper sit easy upon the Throne while the thistles blossomed blue in Bonnie Scotland and there were English loyalists waiting to draw the sword across the Tweed. All these things thought Thomas Purple of 'Sandringham,' member of The Society of Liberators, sitting in the far corner of a red General Omnibus in the Year of Grace nineteen-twenty-nine, and he detected nothing incongruous in the facts, even when he descended at the usual section of the High Street and knocked quietly upon the back door of Mr. Lemuel Goldsnitz.

He was a few minutes late, and the Sparrowfield Branch of the Society of Liberators had gathered together all its members except himself. They sat about a green-clothed dining-room table, ostensibly to play whist, but the Secretary, Mrs. Apfel Brown, had already opened her dispatch case and spread various papers before the Chairman, Mr. Goldsnitz himself. A place had been left for Mr. Purple between the Tynesider Smith, a new-comer to Sparrowfield, and Mr. Murphy O'Flynn, originally from County Clare. The other members present consisted of John Mandeville-Merton, darkly intellectual and President of the Esoteric Optimaens; the two Miss Kilenskys, who worked in the Furrier's shop near the station and were popularly supposed to be aristocratic refugees from Bolshevik Russia; Miss Noggin, a Sunday-School teacher whom nobody supposed to be anything at all but Miss Noggin; two clerks in the employ of the Wholesale Drapery Co., who were experts at distributing disturbing literature in warehouses; and

Mr. William Williams from Wales, of independent means, who owned 'Plynlimmon' on the Great North Road and spent much of his time in travelling about the United Kingdom. All these bent a slightly reproachful glance upon Mr. Purple when he entered from the narrow passage without, still cleaving to his mackintosh cape but divested of his cap, which he had hung up with the other headgear of the male members in the hall.

Closing the door behind him carefully, he advanced smiling to the table, and bowed to the assembled company.

'Your pardon, ladies and gentlemen,' he said ceremoniously. 'I have been unavoidably detained by circumstances.'

He took his seat, flung back the folds of his wrap, and set the whisky bottle firmly on the table. The 'Liberators' observed the action with some surprise, although several of them were not entirely at one with the Rechabites on the subject of alcohol. Mr. Smith became facetious immediately.

'Ullo, 'Ullo, 'Ullo, 'Ullo, 'Ullo!' he exclaimed, in rising crescendo. 'What 'ave we 'ere?'

'The usual, of course,' replied Mr. Purple curtly. He turned his attention to the Chairman, who was regarding him inquiringly. 'The best,' he said, 'that money can procure; nectar, gentlemen, wherein to quaff the 'ealth of His Gracious Majesty Charles Edward, when our deliberations are ended and our social assembly begins. Meanwhile I see as you 'ave started business without me, and I'd be obliged to know 'oo you 'ave decided to send forth as messenger between this city and the coast, if so be as you 'ave already decided.'

Miss Noggin, recovering from her alarm at the sight of a quart of 'John Haig' on the 'Liberators' table, decided that Mr. Purple was perpetrating one of his occasional jokes, and giggled nervously. The Chairman, however, did not smile, and the Secretary whispered rapidly in his ear. He adjusted his eye-glasses carefully and met Mr. Purple's gaze intently. He made measured answer.

'If you mean, have we chosen our agent for propaganda at Pebblishore in July, we have not yet done so,' he said. 'But Headquarters has suggested several names. And I suppose that bottle of yours really contains a soft drink, Mr. Purple.'

'I don't know about soft,' confided Mr. Purple pleasantly, 'but it's uncommon good, and cost me some of the Usurper's siller, I can tell you! But eh, mon, I didna grudge it! It's a cauld nicht, ye ken, and there's mair where that came from that never paid duty to Geordie.' He paused, and then deserted Scots for

English. 'Listen, my friends,' he said, bending low across the table and speaking in a penetrating semi-whisper which seemed to have a petrifying effect upon his audience. 'Entrust this task to me. I ride at dawn, and I will undertake to raise you as good a troop of horse as any in this distracted kingdom. It shall drift, a man and a horse at a time, like shadows to the Gathering Place, without drums, banners, or . . . or . . . pibroch, yet a host in itself, for every man will bear in his heart the music of the noble name of Charles Edward!'

He straightened himself up again on the last word with an abruptness which caused every Member to jump back in his chair, and sprang to his feet, snatching up the bottle and waving it aloft.

'No, gentlemen!' he cried in a sudden passion of emotion, 'we will not wait to propose the health of that glorious name to which we have sworn our allegiance! Let us begin by drinking it! Glasses, glasses! A health to the King over the Water, and may he soon set foot upon his rightful shore, and drive his enemies before him like leaves before the wind!'

Two Members arose simultaneously, one on either side of Mr. Purple. The Miss Kilenskys began to laugh immoderately, clutching each other in a paroxysm of mirth and babbling in a foreign tongue. The arm of Murphy O'Flynn slid ingratiatingly through that of Thomas, while Mr. Smith reached tactlessly for the whisky, and failed to secure it. 'Come along home, old man,' said Mr. O'Flynn's soothing tones. 'Sure and you have a drop taken, and it's home you'll be wanting to go.'

Mr. Purple shook off his detainers and stepped back to the door, looking around him in bewilderment. Something was wrong. These people . . . And then quite distinctly he heard a German voice speaking German, and the voice was the voice of Mrs. Apfel Brown. He stared at her, and in the large white face beheld a distinct likeness to a portrait which he had once seen of the Second George. He glanced again at the rest of the company, and the truth crashed home upon him. This was no true meeting of loyal Jacobites. These people were traitors. They had entrapped him to their meeting in order to discover the secrets of the army of Charles Edward. If one of them left that room then the Great Cause was as good as doomed, and between Charles Edward and catastrophe stood only himself, Sir Sandy MacTavish, mysteriously bereft of sword or dirk but armed not ineffectually with a whisky bottle more than three-parts full and tightly re-corked. With

that and his broad back he must guard the door and suffer none to pass alive. Thank Heaven there was but the one door into the passage!

At that precise instant the hand of Murphy O'Flynn again stole softly beneath his elbow, and swinging the heavy bottle aloft he brought it down violently upon Murphy O'Flynn's head. The Irishman fell like an ox amid pandemonium and the converging of a number of heavy bodies upon 'Sir Sandy MacTavish.' Five 'Liberators' acting as one surged towards the door, but Sandy was fighting for his King and Country, and everybody knew that he was a giant in strength. He yelled defiance, leaping up and down with a frog-like action and wielding the bottle in a manner intimidating even to the powerful Mr. Smith. They should not escape, these traitorous spawn, these betrayers of the Divine Right of Kings, these foreigners, these Hanover Rats! He told them so, and in so doing wasted valuable breath and a number of beautiful many-syllabled words, inspiring as music and gloriously unrestrained; better than any which he had ever applied publicly to the monarchical system.

Actually the Chairman escaped immediately via the window, a dustbin, and his own back-yard, closely followed by the Miss Kilenskys, and Mrs. Apfel Brown the Secretary, who, certain now of a police invasion, retained sufficient courage and presence of mind to gather up all the papers from the table before she departed, leaving nothing more incriminating behind than several packs of cards put ready for several separate games of whist.

Miss Noggins, who loved Murphy O'Flynn, bravely remained and drew him aside into a corner away from trampling feet, where she administered first aid, too stricken to weep, and was there discovered by the police and called as a witness into Court.

The 'Liberators' behaved with quite remarkable tact. When Mr. Goldsnitz had seen his Secretary and the Miss Kilenskys safely off his premises he himself emerged into the street and summoned in a constable. As a member of the Town Council Mr. Goldsnitz is greatly respected, and the five other gentlemen actively engaged in subduing an infuriated teetotaller armed with a bottle of whisky were all citizens of good repute, particularly Mr. Mandeville-Merton, whose beautiful philosophical lectures are so often reported in the pages of the *Sparrowfield Gazette*. The whole case was abundantly clear to all except the sagging suffering Thomas, who a while later was bailed out by Sergeant Bone and subsequently

appeared before an astonished Bench on a charge which had very narrowly escaped being that of manslaughter.

It was perfectly obvious, said the Magistrate, that this was a case of a total abstainer who had suddenly lapsed. By all accounts it was his first offence, and it was to be hoped that it would be his last. Temporarily he must have been insane with alcohol and therefore hardly responsible for his actions. Touched with pity for that drooping figure the Bench waxed kindly, and hoped that this had been a lesson to him. Then, and only then, did Thomas Purple look up and meet the Magistrate's eye with a cold wrath that amazed that kind-hearted man.

Temporarily Mr. Purple has retired from active participation in politics, and the Socialist Member was returned without his further assistance. The 'Liberators' have erased him from their books, although he is still aware that they keep him under supervision, and he meditates going abroad somewhere, only it is so difficult to decide where. He has borrowed a volume of Freud from the Student's Section of the Free Library, but never yet has he dared to mention to anyone his suspicions about the Scientific Journalist and those cups of tea swallowed so recklessly at a small green table in the Golden Bun.

JANE AUSTEN.

SHRUBBERIES, KISSES AND VILLAINS.

IF there was one thing Jane Austen loved above all else in her country houses, it was a shrubbery. Not one of her novels was complete without this useful adjunct. There were hot-houses, flower-gardens, lawns, bowling-greens and rustic seats; but the shrubbery was an object of veneration. 'The evergreen! How beautiful, how welcome, how wonderful the evergreen.' Thus rhapsodised Fanny Price. To have a shrubbery bestowed distinction on its possessor. It was a mark of gentility. Sir Walter Elliot could not object to Admiral Croft removing the many mirrors in Kellynch Hall; but the idea of the shrubbery being approached was abhorrent to him.

It surprised Mary Crawford that a country parson ever aspired to a shrubbery; she had not imagined such a thing. Indeed, Mr. Tomlinson, the banker, was indulged, in having a shrubbery, and a sweep. The first pleasure General Tilney could bestow on innocent Catherine Morland was to view the shrubbery. To old Mr. Woodhouse's 'benevolent nerves,' it was the confines of safety, beyond which he seldom ventured. It was the haven of tranquillity, where lovers sighed and sauntered in privacy. An angry Sir Thomas advised his niece to stay there an hour to 'reason herself into a stronger frame of mind.' The love-sick Marianne would steal away into the winding shrubberies and dream of her fickle lover and Combe Magna. It was in the shrubbery that Darcy received a few hints as to the advantage of holding his prospective mother-in-law's tongue. And Bingley walked with Jane to 'avoid the confinement of an intrusion.' In their recesses, Elizabeth confided to Jane, and Jane to Elizabeth. Emma would go there for relief and for serenity. To the fretful Fanny it was an oasis. George Knightly followed to soothe, to counsel and to hope for Emma. And Lady Susan paced the shrubbery for hours with Reginald, 'calling forth all his tender feelings.'

Did they all speak of love? They must have. Did they kiss? Jane is silent. In all her novels there is not one 'ephemeral intoxication of a kiss.' To an age where fiction on film and in

book is inured to such flimsy contacts, it seems incredible to write a novel without one tangible 'messenger of love,' not even a Platonic one. There are kisses of course, sixteen in all, and of shrubberies there are thirty-eight. We have counted them. It was no sordid quest. Indeed, to rummage thousands of pages for shrubberies and kisses only, would be to reduce romance to cheerless arithmetic. It were as impossible to look for four-leaved clover in a daisy-spangled meadow and not inhale the incense of a summer's day.

Mr. Walkley did nothing in vain. We but followed his example, and bettered the instruction by an addition of thirteen shrubberies. But there was no lover's kiss. It was a curiosity of literature. There are faints and sighs, declarations and embraces. There is scandal and gossip, elopements and adultery. Of lovers' kisses there are none. No 'kiss of mastery' like d'Urberville's. No silence kiss like Angel Clare's. Not one burning kiss like Rochester's, or icy experiment of St. John Rivers. Nothing so unpremeditated as that fatal kiss of Jude's, or so lengthy as that final kiss of Heathcliffe's. We thought of the too susceptible Tupman kissing Rachael; of Meredith's 'Aurorean kiss'; of Landor's 'monument of a fault extinct,' and Petruchio's 'clamorous smack.' We thought of Arthur Donnithorne, like 'Eros himself, sipping the lips of Psyche,' and of Tom Jones kissing Miss Weston by deputy. You search in vain; there is nothing so ebullient in Jane Austen.

Willoughby, the weakling, kissed a cut lock of Marianne's hair, and the wicked Wickham, having stooped to folly, kisses the hand of Elizabeth. Sir Thomas Bertram kisses Fanny, and Fanny kisses her brother. Jane kisses her father, and Mr. Woodhouse kisses his daughter. The sullen George Knightly is the only lover who attempts to carry his love's hand to his lips, but even *he* lacked the courage to accomplish, and let it go.

There are kisses fraternal and kisses maternal; kisses frigid, respectful, formal. There is the tearful kiss of gratitude of Marianne to Elinor, and the hand-kiss of grateful respect from Brandon.

As Nathaniel Pipkin pondered on the beauty of Maria Lobbs, and went down on his knees on the dewy grass, the Vicar of High-bury, drunk, followed Emma into the carriage, and before she could speak, 'he was ready to die if she refused him.' Did he, like Nathaniel, struggle for a kiss? When he seized her hand, did he make prints upon it with his teeth as Mr. Greville did upon the hand of Harriet Byron?

You will find no such oscular demonstrations in the pages of Jane Austen. Had she herself really been in love, would it have made a difference? Had she been in love as George Knightly wished Emma had been, and in some doubt of a return, would it have done her good? Would her ban on kissing be removed? Like Frances Burney we can never conceive Jane Austen choosing 'to lead, or have led so contagious an example.' Anton Tchekhov sent Olga Knipper a 'kiss on the muzzle' by letter. Had the proffered kiss Jane received by post been direct and not second-hand, would she have handed it over to another as she did? No! even in her life there are no kisses that we know of; not even on the eyelids as Maria Bashkirtseff received at the Carnival. She could not enthuse on the doubtful bliss of what she had never tasted.

So in her works, she achieved her end without these suspicious appanages of love's young dreams. Knowing the character of some of her men folk we may think what we like, but our author says so much, sufficient for her purpose and no more. She had ample opportunities of watching in others the result of blunted delicacy, and of analysing the disappointments of selfish passion, without embroidering her novels with any such irrelevant details, or sloppy sentimentalities.

There are a good many weddings, but she does not describe one. A few of her lovers embrace, but if their hearts were sound, to kiss was redundant. If their principles were upright, an exhibition of kissing was an excess too ill-bred to receive the sanction of one so unceremonious. Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies, like Elizabeth Bennet, did divert her—absurdities she loved. A mere kiss, however, was too prosaic, too vulgar. As loudness and coarseness were considered by the consequential Emma to be bad manners, we are sure that kissing to Jane Austen was disgusting. It was something to be assumed, not to be spoken of.

We see Henry Crawford and Maria Bertram trying not to embrace. 'Anne! my own dearest Anne!' said Captain Wentworth. 'Dearest, loveliest Elizabeth,' said Fitzwilliam Darcy. 'Time, my dearest Emma,' said George Knightly, and pressed her arm against his breast. 'My Fanny, my only sister,' uttered Edmund Bertram, and pressed her to his heart. The placid Edward Ferrars, the rheumatic Colonel Brandon, the deceitful Frank Churchill, the gallant Henry Tilney, may have done as much. All for love, but there is not one lover's kiss.

'Eleanor, my own Eleanor,' said Mr. Arabin, and 'pressed his lips upon her brow—his virgin lips which had never yet tasted the luxury of a woman's cheek.' Dr. Slope received a box on the ear. But that was Trollope. As the image of that 'supersensible Parisian,' Claire de Cintre, in the ascetic rags of a Carmelite nun, rose before him, Christopher Newman kissed her white face again and again. But that was Henry James. There is nothing in Jane Austen so luxurious or so violent. Her heroes were all as chaste as Dr. Arabin—and though a few of them were 'a-tremble with the magic of forces greater than themselves,' not one could boast what Arnold Blettsworthy called his 'first sacramental act of intimacy.' But that was H. G. Wells.

All Jane Austen's heroines major and minor, like Sophia Weston, 'loved a tender sensation.' But withal the 'wild volatility' of Lydia Bennet, the romanticism of Catherine Morland, the selfish sagacity of the frivolous Misses Steele, the bewitching prettiness of Harriet Smith, Louisa Musgrove's 'obstinacy of self-will,' the innocence of Jane and the pert-proudness of Elizabeth Bennet, the sense of Elinor and the sensibility of Marianne Dashwood, the sweetness of Anne Elliot, the dependency of Fanny Price, or the suspicious reserve of Jane Fairfax, not forgetting that adorable busybody Emma—however warm their affections—however 'rapid their imaginations in jumping from admiration to love, from love to matrimony,' though the heroes are lukewarm and the villains veneered scoundrels, Jane Austen does not waver from her resolve. There is nothing so banal as that second kiss of Handshut's, in *Sussex Gorse*, or so innocent as Bassanio's casket kiss to Portia.

No emotion, however tender, however vile, is sealed with one pure or profane lover's kiss.

If in her works you search in vain for lovers' kisses, there is a villain in every novel. Indeed, there are no heroes, as we know them; the heroines and what she calls the anti-heroes hold the foreground. Really we might say, that the villains love the heroines but elope with the secondaries; and the heroines in turn love the villains but marry the mediocrities. Willoughby loves Marianne; Wickham loves Elizabeth; Crawford loves Fanny; Elliot loves Anne; Emma loves Frank Churchill; Thorpe loves Catherine; Musgrave loves Emma Watson; Lady Susan loves De Courcy; Mary Crawford loves Bertram. In fact she mildly apotheosises her villains, paints them in all the glowing colours of beauty, love,

admiration, probity and manliness. Maidens more fastidious than Portia did succumb to their manly charms. You are infected with her enthusiasms. Your critical anticipations are lulled to sleep. She leads you on unwittingly to the very brink before she reveals her secret. This is one phase in the consummate art of Jane Austen : the art of concealment. She has the story-teller's unerring instinct of deluding the reader as to the true motive of her characters. We know of few writers who so artlessly achieve this distinction. Like the 'respectable Dr. Marchmont' she once complained of, her lovers were kept apart for the equivalent of five volumes. We defy any reader to predict that Elizabeth's prejudice would blend with Darcy's pride. That Fanny Price would be the wife of Edmund Bertram. That Henry Tilney would follow Catherine Morland. That Elinor would ever marry Edward Ferrars. That Frederick Wentworth would 'spread his canvas' and persuade the sweet Anne Elliot to be his wife. Or the busy Emma, so positive, so precise, would marry a widower. That Marianne would 'submit to the office of nurse' and marry a man old enough to be her father. That Frank Churchill would marry Jane Fairfax ; Lady Susan, Sir James Martin ; or Emma Watson, Mr. Howard.

Those whom she loves, she first chastises. Chills your admiration with her cold ablutions. Steeps them with implacable resentment. An atmosphere of wilful misunderstanding shrouds their characters : their faults are magnified, their motives misconstrued, their weaknesses are unmasked. She views them from the most unfavourable angles, in the cold light of prejudiced reason. All is vanity, infirmity, insensibility, stolidness, mediocrity : everything antithetical to the villains. Who could love them ? In all but virtue they are what the anti-heroes are not. Virtue, however, was their cynosure, they have no moral interstices, no fatal flaws. Sturdy independence, goodness of heart, openness outshone all romantic attributes. In fiction and in life Jane Austen preferred solid wisdom to witty genius, common sense to clever levity. In the order of their weaknesses, as they first impress us, there are Darcy, Brandon, Ferrars, Knightly, Bertram.

The villains taken as a whole are really not so bad, but taken out of their contexts, as it were, they are indeed of a most unprincipled type. To parody the memorable lines of Macaulay on Jane Austen's clergymen, we might say : there are, for example, six villains none of whom we should be surprised to find in any mansion in the kingdom. Crawford, Wickham, Willoughby, Elliot, Churchill,

Denham. They are all specimens of the middle class. They have all been liberally educated. They all chafe under the same restraints. They are all in love. They are all young. All are liars. Each one has a ruling passion such as we read of in Pope. All are scamps such as the old aunt in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* lectured her nieces to avoid. As 'Don Quixote's heart grew stronger when he grasped his lance' to use a phrase of Trollope's, so did these villains purr at the sight of woman. Who would not have expected them to be insipid likenesses of each other? No such thing. Old Goriot is not more unlike Cousin Pons, Nick Garraty is not more unlike Sir Clement Willoughby, than every one of Miss Austen's young rakes to all his deceitful brethren.

Henry Crawford differed only in degree but not in kind from Stendhal's Julien Sorel. Unlike him, however, he was the gentleman; with Westminster, Cambridge, and four thousand a year to make him in air and manner both lively and pleasant. He was in more ways than one, considerably the best actor of all; and 'could be so polite, so seriously and blamelessly polite.' He was the horrible flirt who claimed as many lovers as the Egyptian princess we read of in *Gil Blas*. If we believe his sister, it required the address of a Frenchwoman, as English abilities had failed to coax or trick him into marriage. Indeed he toyed with maiden hearts, as a cat plays with a mouse. To him 'an engaged woman is always more agreeable than a disengaged.' He passes over Julia to be the 'clandestine, insidious, treacherous admirer of Maria.' He was the confident braggart who gave himself a fortnight to gain the admiration of Fanny Price, and would 'not be satisfied without making a small hole in her heart.' He 'loved to excite the first ardours of her young unsophisticated mind' and was determined to make her love him. As he strove to break this 'unconquerable young lady of eighteen' whose pre-engaged heart he chose to attack—her attractions increased. She grew in height and beauty, 'her *tout ensemble* is so indescribably improved.' 'How the pleasing plague had stolen on him, he could not say.' Fanny, however, was adamant; 'she did not love him, could not love him, was sure she never would love him.' Henry was shocked, he plotted like a calculating connoisseur, explored every loophole and studied every mood, that might persuade her to his will. He examined the ship-news, negotiated her brother's promotion, extolled Shakespeare, glowed over the liturgy. All for love. This was the way to Fanny's heart. She spurned him. Dependent

and poor though she was, she could neither be coaxed, cajoled or bullied into accepting the hand of one whom she profoundly mistrusted. For once in his life Crawford was chagrined and humiliated. The little creep mouse had triumphed. The cat, however, persists. Though apparently reformed, his vices were but dormant, and 'entangled by his own vanity' he succumbs at last, not so much to the charm of Mrs. Rushworth, as 'to the repelling coldness which mortified him.' He could not resist subduing so proud a display of resentment. The 'blunted delicacy and corrupted vitiated mind' that disgusted Edmund Bertram in Mary Crawford, impelled the vain-glorious Henry into committing a 'sin of the first magnitude—a confusion of guilt; too gross a complication of evil for human nature, not in a state of utter barbarism, to be capable of.' He not only blasted his hopes of gaining Fanny's heart; he disrupted the happiness of several families.

George Wickham is a small edition of Maupassant's Duroy. At first a self-imposed martyr, he turns out in the end to be a plausible and unprincipled rogue of vicious propensities. Intended for the church, like Captain Blifill he chose the church military, and was, like him, 'as great a master in the art of love as Ovid.' He was the 'happy man towards whom almost every female eye was turned.' Even Elizabeth thought him the most agreeable man she had ever seen; indeed amiability was written on his countenance. By specious advances he ingratiated himself into the esteem of others by lies. An impecunious and dissipated idler, 'profligate in every sense of the word, with neither integrity or honour, as false and deceitful as he was insinuating.' A fortune hunter who would have abducted a child of fifteen for her money, and to spite the family whose hospitality had nurtured him. Elizabeth Bennet's 'incautious preference for him' he side-tracked for another, when he discovered she had no money, though ultimately, like the gamester that he was, he eloped with her flippant silly sister, a girl of sixteen—out of bravado, or the same yellow streak of cowardliness. To add insult to injury and disgrace he bargained, like an unscrupulous usurer, for the highest price. His debts must be paid, his commission must be purchased, his livelihood must be assured, before he consented to marry her, and even afterwards he lived on the bounty of his relations.

John Willoughby had youth, beauty and elegance such as Marianne's fancy had drawn for the hero of a favourite story:—

the chivalrous knight who rescued females in distress. All that imagination could delineate was Willoughby's. A decent shot, a bold rider, loved books and music, a good conversationalist; would even cheat at cards to give his lady love a good hand; could dance from eight till four without sitting down, and was up again at eight to ride to covert. All was gilt. To be so richly endowed and yet so foul and false. Beneath so glittering an exterior, he suffered what Rabelais called the 'pricking stings of sensuality.' He left the orphaned child, whose youth and innocence he had seduced, unprotected and in the utmost distress.

He was the 'hard-hearted rascal.' A 'scoundrel of a fellow, a deceitful dog.' An unprincipled knave, depraved, expensive, dissipated, and worse than both, a trifling libertine. He sported with Marianne's affection, tricked, avoided, and left her mourning at death's door without one word; to marry a wealthy heiress. His ruling principle was selfishness. Though he had courage enough to fight a duel, he could not withstand his prospective wife's malice, who like Metsu's *Jealous Husband*, dictated his letters; and to appease her passion, he signed what he was ashamed to put his name to. Later, coward as he was, he professed contrition, and 'would have suffered under the pecuniary distresses which because they are removed, he now reckoned as nothing.'

Of the same brood is William Walter Elliot, heir to the baronetcy of Kellynch Hall. He was the complaisant villain. 'Everything united in him; good understanding, correct opinion, knowledge of the world; and a warm heart. He was steady, observant, moderate, candid—his manners so polished, so easy, so particularly agreeable—undoubtedly the gentleman.'

Sweet Anne Elliot soon found, however, that Sunday travelling was the least of his bad habits. He would have sold his baronetcy for fifty pounds, arms and motto, name and livery included. He married the daughter of a grazier—not for love, but to purchase his independence; after first being secured of the real amount of her fortune. His ingratitude and inhumanity to the stricken widow of a friend whose purse he had drained, 'no flagrant open crime could have been worse.' He was a 'disingenuous, artificial worldly man, rational, discreet, polished, but he was not open—this was a decided imperfection.' A man 'without heart or conscience, a designing, wary, cold-blooded being, totally beyond the reach of every sentiment of justice or compassion—black at heart, hollow and black.' His whole life one of duplicity and treachery,

who for his own interest would be guilty of any cruelty. Balked in his designs on Anne, he makes sure of his barony by making Mrs. Clay his mistress, in spite of 'her freckles, projecting tooth, and clumsy wrists.'

Frank Churchill was the deceitful villain, young, proud, luxurious, selfish; 'with no English delicacy towards other people.' A very weak young man, who wrote flourishing letters full of professions and falsehoods. Having induced the most upright female mind in the creation to stoop to a secret engagement, he 'flirted excessively,' even in her presence, with another, to delude his friends and relations as to his attachment. Travelled twice sixteen miles over, under the pretence of having his hair cut; when in fact his errand was to buy a pianoforte for his betrothed: which transaction only complicated his guilt and surrounded her in an atmosphere of abominable suspicion. He was the eavesdropping villain, whose smooth plausible manners drew others to express sentiments they would never have uttered had they known his warm predilection to the person scandalised. He carried on 'a system of hypocrisy, and deceit, espionage and treachery, with such profession of openness and simplicity, and such a league in secret to judge us all.' 'None of that upright integrity, that strict adherence to truth and principle, that disdain of trick and littleness.' 'He was a disgrace to the name of man.' The 'abominable scoundrel' whose understanding was perverted by mystery—finesse.

Sir Edward Denham was the seductive fop who felt he was bound to be a dangerous man—quite in the line of the Lovelaces. Loved 'novels that display human nature with grandeur—such as exhibit the progress of strong passion from the first germ of incipient susceptibilities.' He was the champion of 'illimitable ardour.' His hero 'must hazard all, dare all, achieve all, though at the risk of some aberration from the strict line of primitive obligations.' With such loose thinking, and such diletantism, there is no wonder that Miss Heywood thought 'him downright silly.'

Tom Musgrave was a trifle; a flatterer, 'very vain, very conceited, absurdly anxious for distinction.'

John Thorpe was the liar, the vulgar young fool.

In Lady Susan we have a 'vamp' of the worst kind, an evil presence that defiled. Like Maria Edgeworth's Lady Isabel,

'Two passions alternately govern her fate,
Her business is love, but her pleasure is hate.'

As a wife she neglected her husband and encouraged other men. As a widow she abused the hospitality of a family whose umbrage she had sought in her apparent distress. Not only did she steal the husband's love, but robbed his daughter also by flirting with her lover, under the pretence of matching him with her own daughter; but would have married him herself had he been 'one degree less contemptibly weak.' She had everything to commend her, beauty, symmetry, brilliance, grace; and eloquence 'too often used to make black appear white.' Her 'countenance was absolutely sweet, her voice and manner winningly mild.' Never was a woman more ingratiatingly endowed with all the outward attributes of female loveliness. Yet at heart she was vile. Such gloss; such putridity. Having ruined one family, she plaintively insinuates herself into the household of her brother-in-law whose hostility she had once earned by her efforts to thwart his engagement. Her dangerous abilities were common knowledge. Having imposed upon the husband, she plans to win her sister-in-law's heart through her children. Before very long this very sister-in-law's brother, attracted to the scene by this 'most accomplished coquette in England'—though forewarned—succumbed to her many charms. The astuteness of thirty-five was pitted against the innocence of twenty-three. His wealth alone attracted her; she could not love him. His affection won, she derives exquisite pleasure in subduing his proud spirit. With 'intentions of absolute coquetry she represses by the calm dignity of her deportment his insolent approach to direct familiarity, though her desire of dominion was never more decided.' Certain manœuvres in her conduct make him suspicious, she, however, regains his confidence by cajolery, and coldly 'watches the variations of his countenance—to see the struggle between returning tenderness and the remains of displeasure.' She is impelled by conflicting motives 'whether to punish him by dismissing him at once, or by marrying and teasing him for ever.' She would punish her daughter for 'giving indulgence to her whims at the expense of her mother's inclination,' and 'torment her sister-in-law for the insolent triumph of her look.' Her vices, however, did not desert her. Though still professing her love for this youth, she could not resist the prurient charms of the man whose family she had robbed of its peace. Like Lucifer, she fell. This guilty liaison proved her downfall. Her designs now despoiled, she marries the wretch whose weakness she once despised. With only her husband and her conscience against her,

she had left behind a trail of unhappiness, strewn with victims of her wickedness. In her callous nature, there was no consciousness of guilt. Indeed to compare with such a woman, Madame Bovary was a saint; no man's enemy but her own.

The novels of Jane Austen have, what Trollope said it was ordained all novels should have, a male and female angel, and a male and female devil.

Though it was sweets to the sweet to the angels, as to the devils, she does not exaggerate the consequences of guilt. No one knew better, that 'in this world the penalty is less equal than could be wished.' Like the family of Slopes we read of in *Barchester Towers*, they never starve, they always fall on their feet like cats, and live on the fat of the land. But 'without presuming to look forward to a juster appointment hereafter,' she does not contrive even by the elastic laws and licences of fiction to correct this injustice. That man was inconstant did not make her in mind more accessible to any principle or desire of revenge. Causes were not wanting to extenuate somewhat the most heinous offences. In one novel we find that 'Natural folly even imbecility in a beautiful girl was a great enhancement to personal charm.' To Jane no less than Emma, 'Wickedness is always wickedness, but folly is not always folly.' Wickedness, Jane Austen never temporised with. Mary Bennet, with her strait-laced observations of threadbare morality, was an object of satire. So was Mrs. Bennet an object of disgust, with her 'want of shame in being more alive to the disgrace of her daughter's want of new clothes, than her eloping and living with a man for two weeks, before her nuptials took place.'

'Unintelligibly moral people' she had no patience with. 'Pictures of perfection made her sick and wicked'; she told us so. In such persons, these were weaknesses; the attributes of 'bending little minds,' offences against common sense. That Mr. Collins could change from Elizabeth to Jane—and from Jane to Charlotte—'done while Mrs. Bennet was stirring the fire' was despicable; unforgivable in a clergyman. Stains of 'illegitimacy though unbleached by nobility,' she could not despise, but faults of principle were contemptible. Her scorn is reserved for cruel gaiety; for cold-hearted ambition. Mary Crawford reproaching the detection rather than the offence of her brother's crime; the ambitious levity of her suggestion to bribe Tom Bertram's physician; Lady Susan's callous wish that Sir Reginald would soon die.

Isabella Thorpe and Lucy Steele could do no worse : but they were silly. It was all for love. Only vitiated minds could stoop to such expedients. These were the faults our author held up, not only to derision but to obloquy. Yet somehow, in life and letters, she was 'impatient to restore everybody, not greatly in fault themselves, to tolerable comfort.' And even for the rest she had some regretful regard. Her forgiving heart could never allow ranking animosity to dwell for long within its generous precincts. Their greater punishment she consigns to the deity ; she leaves them to vexation, self-reproach, regret, wretchedness, and presumed that even the most vicious had in their composition some tincture of penitence. Those whom she had once cherished with admiration, if she found them wanting in principle, were temporarily ostracised. With Attic eloquence withering in its cold logical severity, she pours scorn and contempt, in perfect and lucid sentences, in language that could not be improved. She 'recapitulates the particulars of past sad scenes—all the minutia of distress upon distress—pity for them was all over.' She dwells on their 'unwelcome obtrusiveness—the irremediable mischief done.' The chill of Dante's frozen circle hangs about them indeed. Adultery, though by no means exonerated, was to some extent condoned if the culprit showed signs of genuine penitence. Henry Crawford's sin, however, was against the Holy Ghost ; his moral lapse was unforgivable. 'A compliance, a compromise, an acquiescence in such conduct as his was loathsome.' Nothing so libidinous could be laid at Mrs. Norris' door. Her sin was one of spitefulness, nothing but spitefulness. Her presence was an 'hourly evil.' 'Not even Fanny had tears for Aunt Norris, not even when she was gone for ever.' To deserve such a fate, is to be pitied indeed. We know of no character in all Jane Austen's work so irredeemable.

In the end, however, her heart triumphs ; her purpose achieved, if she does not bring them back to the fold, suppliants are not wanting to soften, to temper and to plead even for the wicked and the uncharitable.

Henry Crawford was a man of sense. Lady Susan could be kind. Elizabeth Bennet gave Wickham her hand to kiss. And even Elinor Dashwood, for a moment, wished Willoughby a widower. No worse punishment is meted out to young Elliot than the possibility of his being wheedled into making Mrs. Clay his wife. Emma Woodhouse shook hands with Churchill and wished him joy. Though Pemberley was polluted, Lady Catherine de Burgh was

reconciled; and even the hard-hearted Mrs. Ferrars, if she did not kill the fatted calf, received again her prodigal son.

To Stendhal, a novel is a mirror which goes out on the highway; sometimes it reflects the azure of the heavens, and sometimes the mire of the pools. Truth, however, is a diamond of many facets. The novel as held in the hands of Jane Austen, mirrored a world as reflected through a mind that was singularly free from bias. She approached her work solely as an artist, and as novel writing was her hobby, she took to it without any ulterior motives of being an instrument of social salvation, or as a conduit of escape from the meaningless chaos of existence. She had no need to keep in mind the self-laudatory 'I's' with which Richardson prefaced *Pamela*. The beauty of virtue and the divine power of grace were hers by birth and upbringing. There are those who, reading her works, see Repentance—retribution for some thoughtless or heedless act—writ in large letters on every page. There are others who see Consequence, or social snobbery, permeate every novel. They may be right. We do not think Jane Austen ever thought of such things. She was a kind judge. This much is certain; if the uprightly were all rewarded, the downrightly received no worse punishment than not achieving their nefarious and ambitious ends. Most of her characters have what may be called a nuance; good and bad mingle more or less in the nicest proportions. None are all good, few are all bad. Really, apart from the single bad act, which as Fielding says, no more constitutes a villain in life, than a single bad act on the stage, we could say that there are no deep-dyed villains, as there are no sainted heroes, in Jane Austen. There are no bleached skulls, or dried-up human hearts; no monsters dressed in satin, no lies around which are cleverly twisted gauze and silk. No disreputable scoundrels obsessed in wickedness. To love and be loved have no gross physical meaning, sensuality there is none, or lewdness with its familiar garrulity. Shocks there are, and mild sensations not a few, but there is nothing shocking. That Jane Austen was a 'bit of a precisian' we know, a prude she was not. She saw life in the white light of the noonday sun, and found it, if not faultless—wholesome. She just peeped into the crevices of depravity and stayed neither too long nor too close. Her descriptions are all so chaste. These are our first impressions. But our second thoughts are, that she closed her eyes and ears only after seeing and hearing all she wanted to see and more, and wrote less than she knew, knowing at the same time that the curious reader

would surmise her knowledge of the whole in knowing so much : and really what did she not know ?

She does not follow Colonel Brandon into the spunging house, where the object of his first love, reduced to harlotry by the inconstancy of her husband and the tyranny of his father, had been confined for debt. Nor does she accompany Willoughby to the scenes of his guilty seduction of a moral weakling. A few lines were sufficient to detail Wickham's wicked designs in Ramsgate. Indeed all the perturbations and hysterics of the Bennet family are gone through to the minutest whisper, together with Mary's moral reflections and Mr. Collins' comforting comparisons, but of Wickham and Lydia's pre-nuptial joy-ride for a fortnight in London, hardly a word. We know every line in the character of Henry Crawford, but the scene of his triumphant adultery in a Twickenham cottage is left to conjecture. William Elliot stands before us in all his imperfections, but she does not follow him or his mistress to London, or 'suck in through the conveyance of a keyhole' like Bridget Allworthy, the scene of Reginald in Lady Susan's dressing-room. We can quite understand Fanny Price's astonishment at the impropriety of *Lovers' Vows* being chosen for home representation, the situation of Agatha and the language of Amelia 'so unfit to be expressed by any woman of modesty.' You have only to read this play to find how interwoven is its plot with that of *Mansfield Park*. 'The whole subject of it was love.' This, however, you would never guess on a first perusal of Jane Austen's work. Here lies the greatness of Miss Austen, everything is sweetness and light. What Vermeer is to art, Jane Austen is to literature.

The quality of truthfulness as reflected in her mirror shines on the primrose path of homely existence. The same quality in Hogarth gives us the mire of the pools : in Jane Austen the azure of the heavens. With exceptions, one reflects unruffled serenity, the other the contortions of sordidness.

DAVID RHYDDERCH.

THE DESERTER.

BY E. H. LIDDERDALE.

THE cottage that had been Clarice Herbert's faced south, and on the morning her successor came to see it it was full of sunshine and sweet with the breath of roses and honeysuckle blooming outside, its old-world rooms vacant and meticulously neat. Deeper quiet than that of the surrounding meadow-land enfolded it, a silence other than peace, the silence of recent death and of impending change.

A middle-aged man wearing a worn tweed suit stood in the porch; at the garden gate a taxi waited for him from which two round, young faces watched inquisitively. Perhaps he felt the spirit of the place, for when the door opened in answer to his knock he spoke in a low voice.

'My name is Jessop,' he said to the elderly woman who stood on the threshold. 'I have a letter from the solicitors. . . . Would it be convenient for me to see the house?'

The woman hesitated, looking coldly at him.

'You are Miss Herbert's cousin—the gentleman all this goes to?' she enquired.

'I am.'

'Then come in, sir, it's your right'; and she stood aside to let him pass.

'Wait for me!' he called discreetly to the children in the cab, and went inside.

'Of course I don't want to go all over it—if I might just see the ground floor,' he began, as he followed her into the narrow entry.

'Go where you like, you will find it all in order,' was the reply; and having shown him into a room looking over the little garden, she vanished abruptly into the kitchen at the back.

'A grim old soul,' thought Hugh Jessop as the door closed on her. 'But after all, why should she be pleased to see me? It's the beginning of the end for her, and I expect she knows it.'

The room in which she left him was low and square with a deep bow-window and a glass door opening on the garden, and its pleasantly faded carpets and chintzes, its tables and chairs, had a mellow kindly look, as of old servants with whom one can be completely at ease. Jessop hardly glanced at them; like old servants they

stood so unobtrusively in the presence of the real masters of the place. And it was these he had come to see.

Everywhere, on shelves and tables, and behind the doors of tall cabinets, the room was thronged by specimens of old china, standing alone, or in prim rows, or grouped in little companies with a keen eye to artistic effect. Plates, bowls, vases, cupids, goddesses—in the variety of their gay austerity was no discord; some subtle quality common to them all made of the many, one.

Slowly and attentively, his hands behind his back, Hugh Jessop moved about the room, lingering before any piece that particularly struck him. An observer would have been puzzled by his expression which showed none of the hungry intensity of the connoisseur, hardly the plain man's indiscriminating pleasure. There was in his face wonder rather than admiration; had he been asked to sum up his thoughts he might have answered tersely, 'These things are mine!'

Indeed, he had not yet fully realised himself as the possessor of these, or any other, treasures; the lawyers' letter which informed him of his inheritance had gone astray, and had reached him only three days since; he was still bewildered by the astonishing turn of the wheel that had made him heir of all his cousin, Clarice Herbert, had to leave. So long he had endured, as a mining engineer, the hardships which beset his profession after the War; of the years that had elapsed since his demobilisation not one but had had its burden of care. The contrast between life as he knew it and the respite which fortune was about to bestow seemed as great as that of the smiling Hampshire meadows beyond the cottage garden and the grim Midland town whence he had come. He needed time to get used to it. And so for him the chief marvel of these fragile treasures lay in their relation to himself.

A pair of figures in particular, set alone on a bracket between the garden door and the window, fascinated him, and that not only because such isolation suggested their uncommon rarity. This shepherdess with her creamy ruffles, her looped and flowered petticoat of tender blue, her shoe-buckles and curls and tiny tilted hat, her lovely little gleaming hand protectingly laid on the head of a woolly lamb, how intricate was her delicate perfection! Her companion swain, absurdly playing on a flute, appeared no less choice than she—a worthy lover—but it was the lady who caught and held Jessop's gaze. Her dainty frivolity, the hint of disdain

in her sweet, empty smile, awoke in him an uneasy feeling which had as yet no name.

He was still considering her when the sound of footsteps roused him, and looking out he saw a tall slight woman in black coming slowly up the path. She approached the garden door of the sitting-room, then hesitated and stopped. Their eyes met—for he had moved towards her—and for a moment they both stood silent in mutual embarrassment.

She was probably about his own age—a woman in the early forties—yet she appeared distinctly the elder of the two. For though Hugh Jessop's face was lined and furrowed beyond his years, and his hair had turned grey at the temples, there was a youthful directness in the outlook of his blue eyes, an air of dogged vitality about the whole man. Life had buffeted but had not broken him. The lady's smooth face, her drooping mouth and soft, heavy-lidded brown eyes, even her gait, lacked spring; she had a leisured, sheltered look, as though she was fading not through any outward vicissitude, but from within.

'I must apologise for intruding on you,' she said, breaking the silence in a quiet, beautifully modulated voice. 'I have no excuse for doing so except that I was Clarice Herbert's neighbour and her greatest friend. My name is Dunster. I saw you drive up just now. Am I right in thinking that you are her cousin, Mr. Hugh Jessop?'

He bowed.

'I wonder whether you would allow me to talk to you a little . . . about a matter which is weighing on me a good deal?' . . . (Her self-command wavered perceptibly under his puzzled gaze.) 'I have something to say to you which I feel sure no one but myself knows . . . else I wouldn't trouble you.'

'Do come in,' said Jessop simply. 'I shall be very glad to hear anything you can tell me.'

Ann Dunster entered shyly, and sat down in a deep arm-chair which he brought forward for her; Jessop himself remained standing.

'I dare say you know that Clarice Herbert was a woman of few friends and that she died quite unexpectedly?—she was only ill a few days,' began the new-comer.

Jessop flushed, fancying he caught in her tone some implication of neglect on his part.

'I heard from Morton and Gilder—her lawyers—that her illness had been very short,' he answered, 'but their letter missed me or I should of course have been at her funeral. As it was I only knew

of it too late.' And after a moment's pause, he added, 'I am a very distant relation of hers. . . . We were not in touch with one another. . . . I hadn't seen her since she was a child.'

'No, I know. You lost a great deal, she was so clever—so delightful. . . . It's sad she had no brothers and sisters, no near relations. . . . She was very lonely after her father died. They were all in all to each other.'

Jessop was not a man of ready speech and he found no answer to these wistful regrets. Looking down at as much of Miss Dunster's face as he could see beneath her wide black hat he became uneasy. Why had she come? What had she to tell him that was so difficult to utter?

'Mr. Jessop,' she resumed, suddenly lifting her head with a little gesture of resolve, 'I think what I have to say I had better say quite plainly. But believe me, it isn't easy to put into words; I couldn't do it but that I feel I have a sacred duty towards her. Clarice died intestate as you know, so that all her property passes to you as her next of kin. But that is because she died so suddenly and comparatively young. Ultimately she intended to make a will. She had quite definite wishes . . . plans . . . for her estate.'

Jessop's face grew set, but there was relief in his suspense; he would soon know the worst.

'You mean that she had some one in view as her heir?' he asked quietly.

'Not exactly. She intended to leave a small annuity to old Kate, her servant, who opened to you just now. But no other person would have been named in her will.'

'I'm glad to know that. I should hate to think some poor devil was feeling I had stepped into his shoes by a fluke!'

'Wait a little,' she said, and for the first time a pale smile flitted across her face. She was glad Clarice's cousin had such a frank way with him, was so obviously a gentleman; the ordeal of the appeal she had yet to make should be by that much easier.

But a momentary hesitation again seized her, and seeing it, the odious thought occurred to Jessop that in spite of her curious phrase 'No other person would have been named' in the will, Miss Dunster in some undisclosed manner had had expectations from her friend. She considered herself to have been supplanted by him! The mere possibility of such a thing was harrowing, and he stood helpless, staring at the carpet, till she spoke again.

'The china you see in this room and the next was almost entirely

collected by Clarice and her father,' said she. 'Mr. Herbert inherited the nucleus of the whole thing—just a few fine pieces—from an uncle, and he had the taste and the shrewdness to build on that beginning in the days before old china fetched the king's ransom that it does now. He never gave big prices—he couldn't afford to do so—neither did she. Clarice shared his bent and they worked together through the years, living very simply, often denying themselves all but necessities in order to make a particular purchase. It was their whole passion, and she lived for it after his death. That's how this collection came into being. It is entirely old English, Chelsea, Derby, and Spode, many of the pieces are the finest of their kind. That pair of figures for instance'—(she pointed to the shepherdess and her swain)—'is priceless; there's no saying what they would fetch at Christie's nowadays. But of course such tastes were a big strain on the Herberts' resources; he left her poor, and she made heavy inroads on her little capital in these last years for the sake of her collection. I often scolded her, but to no purpose. She always said, "I've no one to come after me, why shouldn't I buy beautiful things!" The result is that she has left very little money—as you probably know?'

She looked to Jessop for assent, but in vain. What the lawyers had written to him was surely no concern of anyone but himself; he was beginning to feel restive under her gentle persistence.

'All Clarice possessed,' concluded her friend in a trembling voice that grew calmer as she neared the crux of her message, 'the china, her little income, the proceeds of the sale of this cottage—all but the capital needed to buy Kate's annuity, she had intended to leave to the Victoria and Albert Museum with the special proviso that the collection should be kept together and called "The Paul and Clarice Herbert Bequest."'

Miss Dunster had been sitting forward in her chair, and looking anxiously up into his face; now her task in part accomplished, she leaned back and for a moment shaded her eyes with her hand. A tense and long-drawn silence ensued.

'Thank you,' said Jessop awkwardly at last. 'It's best to know these things,' and could get no further. Frost had come suddenly over his summer day. Ah! if only, having said her say, destroyed his content, the lady would leave him to himself! But she did not stir, and soon the soft voice began again.

'There is no evidence whatsoever to support what I've just

told you—no evidence, that is, that would carry any weight in the eyes of the law—except perhaps an allusion in a letter she wrote me five years ago. She was very reserved and had no confidante but myself. I have the letter here, I brought it specially in order that you might read it.'

'Don't trouble—it isn't the least necessary. I entirely believe you,' Jessop assured her, seeing her open a little bag which hung from her wrist.

'It's shadowy evidence, I own,' urged Miss Dunster with her faint smile, 'but I think it does bear me out. Apart from it you have nothing—nothing—but my word!'

'That is quite enough. I haven't the least doubt you are telling me the truth,' he exclaimed, and in perfect sincerity. There was that about her personality which compelled belief.

Nevertheless, yielding to her, he took the letter and read the sentence in which Clarice referred vaguely to a project for 'making South Kensington richer by my possessions.' Miss Dunster watched him covertly the while.

She had dealt him a heavy blow, his troubled face said as much, and as the champion of the beloved dead she should have rejoiced. He knew the facts, the unattested, unproven facts, and he believed them! But she could enter into his discomfiture, and there was sympathy in her tone when she spoke again.

'This is hard for you—and for me; believe me! I would have given a great deal to have spared you. But I couldn't rest till I had said it; indeed, if I had not seen you I should have written. It seemed to me so vital that this knowledge should come to you at once . . . before any step is taken that' . . . she faltered and broke off.

But Jessop had recovered himself, and it was now his turn.

'Miss Dunster, I'll be quite plain because I want to know where I am and why you have told me this,' he said. 'I understand you are asking me to carry out Clarice Herbert's wish—to hand over all she possessed to the Museum?'

'Not I—I am only a voice! She asks it . . . she pleads by me.'

'Do you realise what you are asking?'

'I do! For an act of chivalry, doubly generous because the knowledge has come to you so indirectly. Her wish has no force, except that it is hers. It's just a ghost until you give it life.'

'What makes you expect that I shall do so?' he enquired gravely.

'Simply that I'm convinced you're a man of delicate honour—the way you received me, your readiness to accept my word, proves it!'

Jessop frowned, nettled by her praise and by her quiet assumption that he must needs waive his rights as heir.

'I'm a man of everyday honesty, I hope,' he answered. 'But I ought to tell you that I am a very poor one.'

'Then the generosity is all the greater—as great as the sacrifice!'

He had laid himself open to such a challenge, but it found him unready; it seemed to him uncalled for, like her compliment. Perhaps she felt that she was nearing the limit of a stranger's liberty, for to his profound satisfaction she got up and prepared to leave.

'I've trespassed too long. I do ask you to forgive me,' she said, holding out her hand with a charming gesture. 'Thank you more than I can say—for her sake—for the way you have heard me.'

Jessop shook hands, and opened the garden door, but still she lingered, obviously unwilling to go.

'You'll tell me—you'll write when you have made your decision?' she pleaded impulsively, and then, as though forced by the extremity of her suspense, she added, '*I think I know what it will be!*'

Hardly had she said the words before Jessop stiffened secretly, and the emotions which were surging in him fell into place. For his mind, though greatly agitated, was not really in doubt, and it needed only her false step to show him to himself. He had clutched at her suggestion that he should write; it offered instant escape from a most painful scene; now he rejected it as an unworthy loophole. His self-respect, no less than his sense that she took things too much for granted, saw them from one angle only, constrained him to be open with her.

He reflected for a few moments that seemed to the watcher interminable.

'Miss Dunster,' he said haltingly at last, 'you've asked to know my decision later on. . . . I can tell you now. I'm very sorry, but what you are expecting of me is quite impossible. I can't do it!'

Ann Dunster heard him dumbfounded, unable even to cry out, and seeing her so aghast, Jessop wondered if he had spoken harshly.

'Let me try and explain,' he went on. 'Don't think her wishes are nothing to me simply because she never took care to

give them effect. Believe me, I'm not the man to use that as an excuse. I'd give a great deal to be able to carry them out to the letter! Or if you can't believe it, think of me as what I am—a married man and desperately hard up. That's my justification.'

Still she gazed at him in dumb consternation, until he added, 'The most I could do—it might be better than nothing—would be to hand over a few of the finest things, such as those figures you spoke of, to the Museum in her name.'

But at that Miss Dunster found her tongue.

'A few?' she echoed in horror. 'It's impossible! Clarice would have hated the idea! Don't you see this collection wasn't picked up haphazard, it's not just a lot of china got together anyhow, there's a plan—a unity underlying it. If you separate any pieces from the rest you go dead against her wishes—her ideals—what she saved for . . . starved for!' . . .

The voice grew pitifully shrill ere it broke off, and the speaker turned away from him and stood staring out of the window, trembling.

'I'm sorry!' said Jessop again with patient stubbornness. 'I thought it would have been better than nothing. You see it's not in my power in any case to keep the collection together.'

He said it deliberately, determined that she should face the facts. Had he not faced far harsher ones these many years!

'You mean,' cried Ann Dunster passionately, wheeling suddenly round, 'that because the law allows it you're going to bring the life-work of these two people under the hammer—just because she's dead and can't prevent you?'

'Need it be put in that way?'

'Is there any other?'

'There is.'

A rush of feeling, not resentment but some worthier heat, gave him words in his own cause.

'Miss Dunster, you care tremendously for the things the Herberts lived for. I can't. I've no soul for china, though I can respect those who have. But after all there are other things worth caring for and those are what I know. Shall I tell you what I am? An engineer. Do you know what that means for a good many of us nowadays? To have been out of a job—or in a badly paid temporary one—as I am now—year after year, living as best one can, scraping, borrowing, thankful for anything one's relations can spare. It's worn out my wife, she has worked herself to the bone. I was

at Rugby myself, and I can't afford a decent school for my boys. My little girl of six has a tubercular gland—she ought to live at the seaside. Mind! I'm not complaining, I am only telling you facts. Now do you see why I can't carry out Clarice's wish?—except the old servant's pension; I swear I'll do that! I must sell the china, the cottage, everything. I need every penny. I want to pay back, to save, to give the children their chance. I simply can't afford to let all this pass me by!

The force of his defence, the sudden stress in the careworn face, could not but move the listener; yet still she persevered in Clarice's cause.

'Surely better times are coming. They say trade will revive. If you've sold her things—scattered them for ever—how will you feel then?'

Jessop did not hear. Shaken by the admission of his poverty to a stranger he had turned away and his absent eyes met again the gay empty face of the shepherdess. But now he recognised the feeling she had roused in him as distaste, and he knew why. She stood for immunity, for luxury, and those to whom she and her kind were vital possessions lived in a dream; they knew nothing of life's bitter hardship.

'To me,' he said, pointing to the little scapegoat, 'these things are not necessities—they are just toys. How can *that* weigh against daily bread!'

He turned back to Ann Dunster, and they stood opposed a moment in a tacit conflict too sharp for convention.

'And yet it's true that nothing is so necessary as the superfluous!' she cried despairingly, her courage ebbing. 'You can't mean that for you this beauty doesn't count—the skill of men's hands—this lovely, delicate work like a flower—or a bird's wing?'

To which Jessop answered simply: 'No! *but the children come first.*'

Somehow she knew that was his final word, a rock whence there would be no moving him, and her resistance collapsed. She sat down and hid her face in her hands; to her it was as though Clarice had died anew.

Jessop saw her distress and to give her time to recover he went quietly into the garden, and soon the sound of young voices came to her from outside.

'Daddy, *can't* we see the house? We're so tired of waiting.'

'Hush! don't shout! Not yet. Presently perhaps . . . when

the lady goes. . . . No ! I didn't promise. The journey ought to be treat enough !'

'Daddy, if you don't show it us we'll throttle you !'

'Down, you rascals, down !'

Something in the tone of the command, so much more fond than peremptory, made Ann Dunster look out and she saw Jessop laughing silently and struggling with the children who had been waiting in the taxi, two fair-haired shabbily dressed little lads of eight or ten years old.

They fell and rolled on the grass, then picked themselves up and stood talking to him. She watched him listening and the fatherly light in his eyes as he bent towards their eager, snub faces, smiling and turning from one to the other. Then, slipping an arm round the neck of each he strolled with them through the garden gate and up the shady lane beyond.

'These are his children,' she said to herself, 'his children ! and he calls himself poor !' and clenched her hands in her lap, fighting with herself.

Their voices died away, and left the garden once more as silent as the room where she sat surrounded by Clarice's fragile hoard that, yet unmarketed, gleamed bright and still as a bubble ere it bursts.

Dumb, trusting things, so loved, so prized, and now about to be scattered to the winds, in the pain with which she thought of them was division ; it welled no longer heartwhole from her love of Clarice.

Not their charm, that was for her a long familiar aspect, but their limitation for the first time smote her. Perfect as sea shells, and dead like those who wrought them . . . no promise, no young unfolding . . . finished . . . for ever finished . . . frost-bound . . . changeless.

Was it only because she had fought Clarice's battle and lost that the unwilling tears gathered suddenly and fell ? One cannot do more than resist to the utmost ; surely such a defeat is honourable ! Or was she dismayed to find herself stealing over to the enemy, borne away from her allegiance by a more primal passion than friendship ? A deserter in spite of herself, did her heart justify the father because it failed her at sight of the children ?

She got up, for there was no more she could do for Clarice and she had not courage to await Jessop's return, and slipping out at the back of the house, hurried away.

*THE WAY OF THE WOODPECKER (Dryobates
Minor Comminutus).*

It is not often that the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker nests in close proximity to human habitations ; still less so that the chosen site is in full view from the study window of one who envies the regular bird-watcher. Last year, however, a pair of these handsome little birds selected for their nursery the dead stump of a pear-tree standing less than a dozen yards from my house, and, most obligingly, the north-east side of it facing my study window. They thus afforded me exceptional opportunities of observing their habits, and of convincing myself regarding the method and the significance of 'drumming.'

The pear-tree stump is about seven feet high, the top having been cut off more than ten years ago. In the autumn of 1929 there appeared on its bark for the first time the bracket-like fructifications of a fungus (*Fomes igniarius*). The mycelium of this fungus had, of course, been working its destructive way within for several years ; and it is not impossible that the appearance of the 'brackets' on the outside may have advertised to the woodpeckers that the wood was now sufficiently softened to be hewn out by the beak. Be this as it may, late in the winter, some time in February, there was excavated near the top of the stump, but on the south-west side, a trial hole which was carried inwards for about two inches, and then abandoned.

On April 13 the male bird, easily distinguishable by the scarlet plumage of the crown of his head, began serious work on the actual nest-hole. It is noteworthy that he selected the north-east side of the stump, the side least exposed to driving rain. For nearly five weeks did this persevering little bird hew away at a spot just six feet from the ground to get ready the hollow in which his offspring were to be reared. The female took no part whatever in the work of excavation ; indeed, it was very seldom that she put in an appearance. I have, however, no doubt that she was always within call, and that from the first she was taking an interest in her husband's proceedings ; for as early as April 15, when he had penetrated little more than one inch from the accurately circular entry, I saw him leave the hole, move a few inches round the stump, and give

the bark a few rapid, resounding raps with his beak—a very brief ‘drum,’ and the first that I had heard. Instantly the female flew down to him, and clung to the bark close to the hole for a few seconds; then both birds flew up into a large apple-tree whose branches almost overhang the pear-stump; the female settled on a low branch, the male on her back, and pairing appeared to take place. It is difficult to think otherwise than that that short ‘drum’ was a call, perhaps a sex-stimulant; though it is not so easy to imagine that impregnation took place so long before the nest was ready to receive eggs, though we know that spermatozoa remain alive and functional within the body of the recipient female for long periods in the case of other animals, e.g., the queen bee.

It was not until May 15 that I was sure that I saw the female enter the nest, though I think that she did so on May 11, and certainly saw her close to it on the 12th, when I again witnessed the apparent act of mating. But I have rather anticipated. From April 15 to May 11 the male bird worked throughout the day with remarkably few ‘easies.’ He occasionally drummed on a neighbouring pole up which a climbing *Polygonum* was growing, or on branches of trees, but nothing of special interest occurred. On May 11, however, the male, while still inside the hollowed stump, started drumming. I went and stood beside the stump, and pressed my hands against the bark at the level to which I estimated that he had sunk his nesting-shaft, (I subsequently found that I had placed them about six inches too low), and could faintly detect the vibration set up by the rapidly repeated blows of his beak. It was a few minutes after this that I thought I saw the female entering the hole: the bird’s head was already inside the stump, so that the grey crown of the female could not be seen; but her body is decidedly larger than that of the male, and fits the entry so closely that she has to struggle a little to make her exits and her entrances; whereas the male slips in and out quite easily. It was the struggling body that made me believe that at length the female had gone into the nest so laboriously prepared for her.

The drumming within was repeated early in the morning of May 12; and at 8.0 a.m. I saw both birds just outside the nest, and again mating appeared to take place.

At about 3.0 p.m. on May 15 both birds, evidently much excited, were present outside the hole; so I determined to watch continuously for as long as possible. The female soon flew away, but the male entered the hole, and his pecking was at once audible. After

a few minutes he peeped out of the hole, perhaps to see that the coast was clear, and then retreated into the hollow; only, however, to reappear twenty-one times in quick succession carrying in his beak on each occasion a load of chips which, with a sharp jerk and twist of the head, he spluttered out on to the ground and the leaves of a delphinium growing just below. These leaves were most useful in enabling me to determine when the ejection of chips ceased; for it was a simple matter to shake the sawdust off them, and thus know if any had been thrown out afresh.

Rid of his rubbish, the male again descended, and after pecking away for three minutes steadily, spat out eleven loads of chips. Another three minutes' pecking followed, and again eleven loads were thrown out. At 3.20 the female arrived: whereupon the male at once flew out, and she pushed her way in. Presently she put her head out of the hole, and looked around; then retreated into the nest. This she did thrice. Then she came right outside twice; and each time clung to the bark just outside the hole, and seemed to be inspecting the entry attentively. At 3.37 she came out again and flew away. My vigil was then interrupted for a short time; but at 3.55 I found the male at work again alternately pecking and carrying out the loosened chips as before. Between 4 and 4.35 p.m., when I could watch no longer, he cast out no less than ninety-three loads in batches varying from nine to seventeen in number. That evening, after he had knocked off work, drumming was very frequent in neighbouring fir-trees, being heard dozens of times between 5.40 and 7 p.m.

Next day he was ejecting chips at about midday; and the female was seen to leave the nest at 5.25 p.m. There was again drumming in the late afternoon and evening as late as 9.15 (summer time). On the 17th the female left the nest at 2.10 p.m.; the male threw out chips, only a few, for the last time, and again indulged in much drumming late in the day.

From the 18th to the 26th I was unable to make any lengthy observations; but both birds, especially the male, were seen fairly frequently, sometimes outside, sometimes peering out from the hole. My impression is that the female was then incubating, and the male engaged in feeding her; for on the 24th I was to and fro past the stump many times during the day, and nearly every time saw the male either entering or leaving the nest; and when in the late afternoon I tapped the bark the female looked out of the hole to see what was the matter, but at once retreated

into the darkness. Drumming was performed day after day as usual.

By the 27th the eggs were probably 'hard sat,' and were not left uncovered for more than a few seconds; one bird always remaining in the nest until the other arrived, and then there was a quick exchange of places. This mutual arrangement continued on the 28th and enabled me to make further observations on the 'drumming'; for the male on returning generally alighted first a few yards away on the Polygonum pole, and either called 'keek, keek,' or gave a very brief drum. Twice, however, during the early evening, before going across to the nest, he drummed loud and long and repeatedly on the Polygonum pole. He started with one 'roll' very near the top of the pole; he backed about six inches down the pole, and hammered out another 'roll'; backed again, and again drummed; and so on until he was about a yard down the pole. It was very noticeable that the note emitted by his hammering differed in pitch and in intensity at each 'step,' being loudest when he was at the top, and becoming gradually weaker at each downward shift.

This change in the character of the note, coupled with what I perceived when the drumming took place inside the nest, establishes beyond dispute that the noise is caused by rapidly repeated blows of the beak upon the bark or the wood, and disposes of the contention that it is a vocal performance. Physiologically, there is surely no obstacle to the muscles of a bird's neck being able to contract and relax as rapidly as the pectoral muscles that move the wings; and yet the frequency of the beak-blows is far less than that of the wing-beats of, say, a hovering humming-bird.

On May 30 I first observed food being carried into the nest; and now that the young had hatched, drumming practically ceased, though occasionally a short 'roll' was heard. I noticed that the male when excited, or perhaps alarmed by my near presence in the garden, frequently gave a branch a few sharp raps by way of emphasising the 'keek, keek, keek' alarm cry.

So far as I was able to observe, the nest was always in charge of one or other parent until after June 1. On that day I noted the female calling 'keek, keek' from the apple-tree before flying down to exchange places with the male. She never drummed when in view; and I venture to think the statement in the *Manual of British Birds*, by Howard Saunders and Eagle Clarke, that both male and female produce a vibrating noise by hammering is incorrect.

Whenever I saw the drummer it was always the male ; and drumming outside was never heard when the male was in the nest-hole.

From June 2 onwards both birds were kept very busy feeding the young family, and neither stayed for any length of time in the nest : the brood was probably now sufficiently feathered to maintain the necessary temperature, and their constant twittering gave evidence of health and vigour. But the male appeared to be the more diligent not only in bringing food in the shape of bunches of green or brown caterpillars and occasionally a single large white one, but also in carrying out the fæcal ' ampoules ' of the young birds—I once saw him carry out five of these in fewer minutes. In fact, the frequent slackness of the female caused me to wonder whether she is putting her zygodactyle feet on the same slippery path of parental degeneration as the cuckoo, whose toes are likewise turned two fore and two aft, slid down in ages long past.

On June 11 a new manœuvre in the mode of administering the food was adopted. Up till then, the parents on arrival at the hole had gone straight in ; now, however, each of them in turn clung to the bark just below the hole, and bobbed the load of caterpillars in and out of the tunnel, as though trying to coax the young to come up to the entry and fetch it. But it was not until the 14th that I saw food delivered into the mouths of the nestlings at the doorway, and the parents fly away without going inside.

Early in the morning of June 15, before I or any of my household was up, there was a great to-do and much twittering heard round about the pear-stump. This I believe to have been the flight of most of the young birds from the nest ; for at 8.30 a.m. I found five young starlings trying to force their way, happily in vain, into the nest, and a pair of grey squirrels seated on the apple branches just above it. Something evidently had happened to attract the attention of invaders and marauders to the locale of the nest. Both squirrels were buried next day. However, at 9.15 a.m. the male carried food into the nest ; but I soon noticed that the visits were far less frequent, and subsequently satisfied myself that there was still one young one in the nest. The female was not seen again ; but the male continued to look after this benjamin until it too flew early in the morning of the 21st. During the 19th and 20th this youngster was frequently looking out of the hole, and calling loudly until fed by its father, when it relapsed into silence and the nest until urged by hunger to call for another meal.

The nest being now empty, I measured the dimensions of the

excavation ; horizontally from the outer edge of the bark to the back wall was four inches, while the depth, measured by means of a stout wire bent in over the threshold, was nine inches. On the conservative assumption that the excavation is approximately cylindrical—its diameter is probably greater at the bottom than at the top—these figures show that upwards of one hundred and twelve cubic inches of wood had been hewn out by the male's beak.

Early in the morning of the 23rd one of the woodpeckers was playing about on the pear-stump, picking insects off the rambler rose that is trained over it, and now and again peeping into the nest-hole. Whether this was the male or a young bird I could not determine ; for by now his gay cap had become much worn and dulled. I like to think it was the grand little male, unable even then to tear himself completely away from the scene of his devoted labours.

For several weeks after this date none of the birds was seen at or near the nest. But on the evening of August 16 the male reappeared, in smart new livery, and went to roost in the nesting-hole. Thereafter, throughout the autumn and winter, I frequently saw him "turn in," his punctuality being such that a brief watch of a few minutes before and after sunset was generally rewarded. On very dark, overcast afternoons, however, he retired earlier ; e.g. at 3.30 on November 30.

Neither the female bird nor any of the young were again seen after the latter had left the nest in June. The abandoned trial hole on the south-west side of the stump was used as a winter berth by a Marsh Tit.

OSWALD H. LATTER.

THE SHIPS OF ST. ANN'S.

BY LYDIA MILLER MACKAY.

I.

ABOUT seventy miles north of Auckland, New Zealand, a tall granite column surmounted by the Red Lion of Scotland commemorates a singular Odyssey, little known save among Scottish Highlanders. It is dedicated to the memory of 'a noble band of Empire-builders who left the Highlands of Scotland about the latter half of the 18th Century for Nova Scotia, and emigrated thence during the years 1851-1860; a band of men and women who by their undaunted courage and their steadfast faith in God, did so much to mould the destinies of their adopted homes.' On each of this column's six sides is depicted a ship in full sail, with below, the names of its captain and owner, the dates of departure from Nova Scotia and arrival in New Zealand, and the number of souls carried on board. A further inscription quotes from the Gaelic version of the Old Testament the call of God to Abraham: 'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee.'

The stranger who glimpses a story behind all this, and who would know more of the six ships, how the Highlanders came here by so circuitous a route, and why their travels would seem to have occupied a lifetime, may hear from someone in the neighbourhood a tale that is worth the telling, one that carries with it even on the high seas the atmosphere of a Highland glen.

The old beginnings of the story are mingled in the mind of the writer with long-ago nursery tales told in the far north-west of Scotland in the parish of Assynt, that great wild, beautiful parish, few of whose inhabitants know more of it than a narrow strip of land along its coast, and what may be seen from the one road that runs inland for more than twenty miles through the heart of it to where, on the height of the watershed, the great blue Bens rear their isolated fantastic shapes against the sky. The tale was of Norman Macleod, 'Tormaid Mor'—'The Great Norman'—who was a famous good man, a preacher too of great repute in old times, and who took a great company of people in a ship over the sea to Nova Scotia, and from there to other places.

Grey-haired ministers, talking round their study fires, shook their heads over Norman. He was a schismatic. It was he and a few others of his day who had sown distrust of ministers among so many West Highland people, so that now, seventy or eighty years after he sailed across the Atlantic, each must be tested by his conformity to old ideas. Norman too was of those who had surrounded the sacraments of the Church with such awe and dread that there were few between Cape Wrath and the Lowlands who dared approach the Table of the Lord.

There were other very different stories of Norman. In the early years of last century he had been the idol of the youth of the parish, especially of Stoer, that part of it where he had been born, where there was neither tree nor bush, only grey rock and sand and short green grass, and the wild waters of the Minch beating against its rocks. Norman was a mischievous lad in these days, as the story went, but tall and strong and a great adept in the Highland games. He loved practical jokes, and once when a stupid schoolboy from Loch Crocach was in trouble because he could not learn his psalm, Norman offered to teach it to him, and then when the time came and the boy stood up in all innocence to recite it, there was great scandal because after all it was no psalm but a Gaelic rhyme of Loch Crocach and the queer things there that Norman had made up in the same metre.

Later, the tale went, a change came to him, some mysterious experience which no one knew, and he became a preacher, only he had no love for ministers, neither for old 'Mr. William' who drank more than was seemly even in these old easy days, and was indeed all that a minister ought not to be; nor for his assistant, good Mr. John Kennedy, much revered and respected. Norman, as an old book says, was 'a thorn in his side,' for he held meetings in Stoer and gathered all the young folk about him, and criticised many things in the Church, and had his own ideas. It was strange that with all this he should have desired to be a minister himself; but so it was, for when he was twenty-eight or so he gave up crofting and fishing and went to study Arts in Aberdeen.

With these old tales of Norman there are others mingled which also have to do with the Odyssey. There is the story of the Highland 'clearances' which one could wish was no more than a legend, and the story of the raising of the 93rd Highlanders, and of war-time promises of long leases for their lands to such as would join the colours; promises easy to make and easy to believe with a

red-coated sergeant telling tales of glory to be won in the Napoleonic wars, with bagpipes playing and estate officials making everything easy for the old people left behind. Afterwards there were changes and hard facts, when the great estate of which Assynt formed a part came under the management of a clever man of business with ideas about the profits to be made by sheep farming; ideas, too, about the financial foolishness of crofts, these tiny low-rented farms scattered about—an incredible number of them—among green glens and by the side of lonely lochs in the great tumble of heather-covered hills, which in our modern days make a great deer forest.

Early in the second decade of the century these inland crofts ceased to be. The houses were pulled down or burned, and their inmates, incredulous to the last moment of what was about to happen, were moved to the fringe of land along the seashore, where tiny plots were given to them and they were required to build houses and to wrest the chief part of their livelihood from the sea, that is when they could find boats and acquire knowledge of a new craft. Disabled soldiers drifting back from the wars found their old homes mere heaps of blackened stones, and those they had left behind eking out a miserable existence in these new and uncongenial surroundings. The passion and pain of these bewildering times have passed into some of the most touching of our Highland laments, but, to begin with, they were unvoiced.

Norman Macleod, after finishing his Arts course in Aberdeen, had gone to Edinburgh to study Divinity, and there after a year or two had his own dreams broken. One story has it that he was rusticated because of too outspoken comments on the convivial habits of some of his professors; another that he found it impossible to sign the articles of the Church. At all events he returned about 1813 to Stoer with no hope of ever becoming a minister.

Then, with his coming all the pent-up feeling in the hearts of the people found expression. All his own smouldering indignation and anger burst into flame. He was no ordained minister, but he preached—and not always the gospel. Mingled with the religious consolations he brought to the people were fierce, almost fanatical, denunciations of all landlords, and of all ministers who were chosen by the landlords and owed their livings to them. His hearers hung upon his words; he was their spokesman, one of themselves. He became from that hour their leader, 'Tormaid Mor'—'The Great Norman.'

It was not possible, however, that Macleod should stay long at home. His father's croft on the sea-swept promontory of Stoer had been subdivided and two of the evicted families settled upon it. He went therefore, as parish schoolmaster to a school of some local repute at Lochbroom, a little farther down the coast. Here, since education was in those days under the control of the Church, he was in the position of having his work supervised by Dr. Ross, the minister of the parish. Macleod would have found any kind of supervision or control irksome to his nature, and in this case the character of the minister was unfortunately as strong and as unbending as his own. This excellent man is described in the annals of the time as having but one weakness, a fondness for litigation. Norman and he were almost instantly at war, a thing not to be wondered at perhaps, because Macleod believed it his duty to criticise and denounce, in season and out of season, certain 'apostasies,' as he would have called them, in the Church of his fathers.

It should be said in fairness to him that his quarrel with the Church was no petty one, but was in truth much the same quarrel which thirty years later broke the Church of Scotland in two; that same quarrel, moreover, which has only now finally been settled by the recent Union of Scottish Presbyterianism.

Norman had married before coming to Lochbroom 'the wise and gentle Mary Macleod,' and about a year later their first child was born. By this time, things were so stormy between minister and schoolmaster, that rather than have the little one baptised by his opponent, Norman, with his wife and baby, undertook a long and difficult journey across the trackless hills to the neighbouring parish of Lochcarron, there to have the rite performed by the Rev. Lachlan Mackenzie, a Highland saint and mystic with whom, then at least, even Norman had no quarrel. Dr. Ross, however, had got wind of Norman's intention, and when the travellers arrived at the Manse it was to find him there before them, quite determined that no other minister should interfere with his parishioners. Macleod and his wife were obliged to return to Lochbroom with their purpose unaccomplished. What Norman said is not recorded. It may have led to the next step. Dr. Ross, no doubt with the intention of getting rid of so outspoken a schismatic, had the schoolmaster's salary reduced. It was an impossible position. Norman resigned and returned once again to Stoer.

When the Government, in order to relieve the situation in the Western Highlands, offered land in Nova Scotia to evicted crofters

as well as a ship to convey them across the Atlantic, Norman Macleod threw the whole weight of his great influence into the scale of acceptance. He and his would accompany the emigrants; he would be their minister in the new land. One fancies that he dreamed of a little theocratic colony untroubled by landlords or ministers of a State-ridden establishment. Flowerdale Bay on the west coast of Ross is sometimes pointed out as the place where he and his followers built the ship in which they sailed. The tradition has no foundation in fact, yet it shows how largely the figure of Norman loomed in the whole affair. He was without doubt its moving spirit.

Not only Macleods, Mackenzies and Mathesons of Assynt were numbered among his followers and sailed for Nova Scotia, but representatives from other parishes and from many other clans—Mackays, Macraes, Macdonalds and the like. There were no high hopes among them; they went as prisoners of circumstance with bitter grief in their hearts. It is said that when men, women and children stood weeping on the deck watching the blue summits of their beloved mountains fade into the distance, Macleod, wrapped in his great blue coat, broke into the words of 'Lochaber No More,' that most touching of Highland laments. The whole company took it up and sang

'Lochaber no more, Lochaber no more,
We will return to Lochaber no more.'

So began the first voyage of an Odyssey which was destined to end far indeed from the country to which it then set out.

II.

The voyage came near to being a disastrous one. The vessel, like so many of the emigrant ships of the time, was almost unbelievably ill-equipped. No food was provided, passengers being required to bring their own provisions, while for sleeping accommodation there was nothing but the bare boards of the lower deck, where families encamped as best they might among their boxes and bundles. The ship encountered severe weather and was blown out of her course. Sickness broke out, and after several weeks of misery, when about midway between Ireland and Nova Scotia, the vessel sprang a leak and the captain declared his intention of returning to Ireland for repairs. To the emigrants this was the last straw, for their provisions were beginning to give out,

and even if they reached Ireland in safety they had little means with which to buy fresh supplies. Norman went to the captain. He had studied navigation and had kept a record of the voyage by which he calculated they were now more than half-way across; he insisted that the vessel should continue on her way to Nova Scotia. The captain was furious and threatened to put him in irons. Yet, strange as it may appear, Macleod had his way, either from sheer force of will and personality, or because he was backed by so many desperate clansmen, some of them sufficiently versed in the lore of the sea to have taken the management of the ship into their own hands. The emigrants reached Pictou, Nova Scotia, in safety, but only to find bitter disappointment awaiting them. The land granted by the Government turned out to be a tract of virgin forest, winter was coming on, log houses had to be built and they knew nothing of the art of the woodsman. They had little money, and, were it not for the kindness of the Highlanders already settled in Nova Scotia, the help and inspiration of Macleod, and the courage and spirit of the whole company, the entire enterprise might have ended in tragedy. As it was, the emigrants struggled, one hardly knows how, through the first winter, and after a year or two had adapted themselves in some sort to the new country. In these early days, however, they struck no roots in its soil. When at the end of three years their leader told them that he had been asked by a colony of Highlanders in Ohio to become their pastor and that he was minded to accept the invitation, they were so dismayed as to declare that, if he went, they would go with him. Norman was deeply touched but would not give up his project. He was still unordained, and, as he could neither baptise nor marry, was unable to exercise some of the most important duties of his calling. The only Presbyterian ministers in Nova Scotia were sent out by the Church of Scotland, so that he was in the same difficulty about receiving ordination there as he had been at home. The Presbyterian Church of America was in a different position, and only by accepting the call to Ohio could he complete the preparation for the life-work to which he had set himself some twelve years earlier. He was torn between his determination to go and his desire to stay. As to the suggestion that his friends should accompany him, the expense of transporting them in the ordinary way was far beyond their means. In the predicament he and they resolved to build a ship, which would be able to make the journey of three thousand miles down the American coast,

and through the Gulf of Mexico as far as the Mississippi River. Among the surrounding Nova Scotian settlers the project was treated as a jest, and when Norman Macleod laid the keel of the vessel in the summer of 1819 the scoffers likened him to Noah and his family, and dubbed his vessel the *Ark*. Undaunted by ridicule, the Highlanders went on with their work; some of them had built fishing boats and they saw no reason why they should not build a ship. The vessel was built, masted, rigged, outfitted, and had the *Ark* painted on its bows—this last touch very characteristic of Macleod's humour. Some time in May, 1820, its sails were set, and Norman and his friends with no presage of misfortune embarked for the Mississippi.

The daring project, into which had been put so much labour and enthusiasm, was doomed to failure. Almost at once the *Ark* encountered a storm so violent, that it blew the little home-made ship completely out of her course and tossed her up and down like a plaything on waves that threatened to engulf her. For days and nights, during which the hatches were fastened down and the women and children crouched together terrified in their cramped quarters, the Highlanders fought with the elements, till deafened, battered and exhausted by the tempest through which they had passed, they ran into a land-locked creek of what proved to be Cape Breton Island, the most easterly point of Canada. When the hatches were opened and the women and children stumbled on deck, they beheld a prospect as beautiful as any their own West Highlands could afford—a great sheltered arm of the sea ran inland for many miles, pine forests skirted its shores, hills rose on either side, and above all towered the summit of what they came afterwards to know as 'Smoky Mountain.' All were charmed with the aspect of the place. Enquiries on shore showed that this almost uninhabited district was named 'St. Ann's,' that the waters of the creek teemed with fish, and that the land waited for settlers. It seemed to the Highlanders that a Divine Providence had guided them to a place peculiarly suited to their needs. Here they would remain. Norman abandoned the idea of Ohio; henceforth his lot was with these men and women who had twice left their homes to voyage under his leadership into the unknown.

And now all began to go well with the emigrants. Without difficulty and with little delay, they obtained large blocks of land alongside the creek. In the hard school of the last three years,

many of them had become expert lumbermen ; trees were felled, and before the summer was over log cabins had been erected for every family. Those of the company who had been left behind in Pictou heard of what had befallen their companions and joined them at St. Ann's. A school was presently erected and then a church. After two or three years Macleod paid a visit to America and there, at last, obtained the ordination that for him had been so hard to come by. On his return he was made a Justice of Peace of Cape Breton, and for a whole generation he was schoolmaster, magistrate, and pastor to the community ; his dreams took shape ; St. Ann's became a little bit of the Highlands of Scotland. Highland customs were cherished : Highland music, Highland games, the old hospitable ways. Families gathered in the winter nights to the traditional 'ceilidh,' where round the great log fires Celtic tales were told and Celtic songs were sung ; when the evening was over, a lighted branch took the place of the blazing peat, which in Western Ross or Sutherland guided the guest through the darkness to his home. Each family gathered for morning and evening worship, and the old plaintive Gaelic psalm tunes rose from every house. On Sundays the scattered families walked long distances to the church, which Norman had made the centre of the life of the community. In winter, when the creek was frozen over, they had no need to walk, but instead, they drove their sledges over the ice. The little farms prospered and many of the young men took to the sea, several of them (including some of Norman's sons) becoming captains on Canadian vessels. By 1840 the colony had become so large that a new church was required and built to seat a thousand persons. Macleod was loved, dreaded, and revered. His will was law, here no landlords troubled, the only Church which had any authority over him was more than a thousand miles away.

III.

The crowning adventure of Norman's life was, however, yet to come.

In the 'forties things began to go less well with St. Ann's. Potato blight appeared in the island and caused considerable distress, while a trading experiment from which much had been hoped proved unsuccessful.

In 1848 Macleod had a letter from one of his sailor sons from

Australia, describing in glowing terms the climate and possibilities of this as yet little known possession, and urging his father to sail for the new land with as many of the St. Ann's people as cared to make the venture. Norman was by this time nearly seventy years of age, yet the suggestion stirred him, the old spirit of adventure re-awoke. Might he not before he died found another colony nearer to his dreams than even St. Ann's had been? He gathered his people together and laid the project before them. It is said a year was given to the consideration of the matter, and at the end of that time it was decided to build a ship capable of transporting between two and three hundred persons to Australia. Trees were felled, and the work of building began and went on amid growing enthusiasm. In a year the vessel was completed, but the work was held up for lack of funds to rig and equip her. Macleod offered his house and land for sale, and after some months of waiting a purchaser was found and they were sold for \$3,000. By the autumn of 1851 the ship was ready for sea and was named the *Margaret*, after Norman's youngest daughter. It was built, rigged and equipped by St. Ann's people, manned by a St. Ann's crew, and commanded by a St. Ann's captain.

Meantime, throughout the two years' preparation, the venture had taken on more and more the character of a religious enterprise. Along with the material advantage to be gained by going to Australia, there had come to be mingled something of Macleod's own mystic spirit, so that in the end it seemed as though the expedition were setting out in obedience to a Divine command. So much was this the case that, contrary to the strict Sabbatarian ideas of the Highland people, the day of embarkation was fixed for a Sunday. A huge gathering crowded to the farewell service, and so moved were the people that it is said only the lack of ships prevented the entire colony from sharing in the Odyssey. On Monday, October 28, 1851, the anchor was weighed to the singing in Gaelic of the Hundredth Psalm, and, forgetful of other unhappy voyages, the Highlanders once again set sail.

IV.

If, thirty years before, the people of Pictou had thought it a jest that Norman and his people should set out in a ship of their own building for the Mississippi, the expedition which now left St. Ann's appeared to many sensible people in Cape Breton

a far crazier adventure. Not only was the *Margaret* a frail vessel for so great a journey, but the idea of men, women and children leaving their settled homes and setting out, without any assured prospects, for an unknown country, seemed of all Norman's eccentric doings the most peculiar and the most hazardous. Yet on this, the third and greatest of their voyages, only good fortune attended the travellers. Wind and weather were kind to them. They encountered no storms and met with no mishaps, so that to the end of their lives those who sailed in the *Margaret* looked upon the voyage as upon something wonderful, a long, serene, Divinely protected interlude in their strenuous hard-working lives. They remembered no discomforts, only the thrill of the adventure, the sunny skies, the music of the pipes, the deck games and Norman holding family prayers under the stars—stars that changed as they journeyed, till the Great Bear was left behind and they saw instead the Southern Cross burning above them. The *Margaret* called at the Cape, where the Highlanders excited so much interest that the governor gave them a warm invitation to settle in the Colony. This they declined, for their call was to the Antipodes, and they set out once again, sailing north for a time so as to escape the wild weather of the Antarctic Ocean, and then again south-east till they came to Perth in Western Australia; and then, 167 days after leaving St. Ann's, to Adelaide, where they dropped anchor in the roadstead, there being no wharf in those days and the town itself giving no hint of its future greatness. It had been expected that Macleod's son, Donald, would meet the party here, but he had gone, it was found, to Melbourne.

The conditions of life in Australia had changed to a quite overwhelming extent while the *Margaret* had been on the high seas, for during those very months gold had been discovered, first in New South Wales, and then in Queensland and Victoria. Settlers could think and talk of nothing else. Everywhere men were giving up their employment and rushing to the diggings. In South Australia so great was this rush that 'it seemed as though some plague had passed over the colony, sweeping away the male population and leaving only women and children behind.' Prices had risen enormously. Everywhere there was unsettlement and uncertainty. It must have been all rather bewildering to the St. Ann's folk. They were disappointed in the climate, in the tales of heat and drought; disappointed, too, to find that all the coast land had been already taken up. They made some journeys inland and

came very soon to the conclusion that their Land of Promise, wherever it might be, was not in South Australia. They held a consultation and resolved to follow Donald Macleod to Melbourne.

The travellers found Victoria considerably less like their dream than South Australia had been. The gold fever there was at its height, the rush to the diggings so great that, for the moment, all was chaos in Melbourne. The customs officials and police had deserted *en masse* for the diggings, and it had been necessary to send convict pensioners from Tasmania to take their place. Shopmen had left their counters and stockmen their stockyards. Over fifty vessels lay useless in the harbour, their crews having gone off to the gold-fields. Fortunes were made and lost within a few weeks, and the city was filled with diggers dissipating their wealth in orgies of extravagance. Whatever the young folks of the *Margaret* thought of all this, Norman and the sober heads of families looking for homes for their wives and children must have found the situation unpromising enough. They disembarked presently and, as much from a desire to keep together as to avoid the high prices of lodgings, they set up an encampment on the banks of the Yarra just outside the city, and for the next two years or so seem to have lived under canvas.

Of this period there is very little record, only such details as a few old men and women remember to have heard from their parents. Some of the young men went to the gold-fields and brought back little piles of gold dust, but no large fortunes seem to have been made, and the community as a whole seems to have been very little affected by the feverish excitement that surged about it. Indeed among the anomalies of the time, there can have been few stranger than the presence of this little company of Highlanders, living their simple life on the banks of the Yarra, keeping their strict Sabbaths, gathering for their Gaelic worship in the circle of their tents, singing in their plaintive Gaelic psalm tunes of things 'more to be desired than gold, yea, much fine gold.'

The *Margaret* was sold as if the Odyssey were over, yet after months of prospecting for a suitable place of settlement, the leaders of the party found themselves no nearer the object of their quest. Whatever the reason, whether the climate, or the lack of money to stock their farms, or the unsettled state of the colony, which at this time made even the Governor of Victoria despondent about its future, they became less and less hopeful of finding a settlement in Australia. At this juncture a gentleman of position in Mel-

bourne suggested to Macleod that he and his friends might think of New Zealand, with whose Governor, Sir George Grey, he offered to put him in touch. A correspondence ensued—a slow business in these days. There was much perplexity, for the Highlanders, as has been seen, were now without a ship in which to pursue further travels. The spirit of the camp flagged. Then Norman dreamed of a white-sailed ship that was to bring deliverance, and when the *Highland Lass*, captained and owned by the brothers, Donald and Murdo Mackenzie, arrived from Cape Breton with a company of one hundred and eighty-eight on board, to share the fortunes of the earlier party, it was hailed as the fulfilment of the dream, and a mark of the watchful care of Providence.

Certainly with the arrival of this boat, the long period of unsettlement and disappointment came to an end, and almost immediately a joint expedition was made up and set out for New Zealand. At Auckland it was warmly received by both settlers and governor; excellent land was offered in various districts and choice was made of Waipu, which lies, as has been said, seventy miles north of the capital and which had no other settlers. It was well watered and well timbered and the Maories in the district were friendly. Sir George Grey granted a block of 30,000 acres to the community as a whole, and on the first day of September, 1854, three years after leaving Cape Breton and thirty-seven years after Norman and his friends had left the Highlands of Scotland, the first contingent of the St. Ann's people landed on the beach of their new home. Their first act was to gather together on the shore and sing part of the psalm which records the wanderings of the children of Israel and their final arrival in the land of Canaan.

From the first the Highlanders were enthusiastic about New Zealand, sending to Cape Breton glowing accounts of a climate so equable that there was no need to make hay since cattle could pasture all the year round in the open. Hundreds of St. Ann's people made up their minds to follow their friends. Again they took to shipbuilding, again the ships were equipped, provisioned and manned for the journey across two oceans. In 1856 Mr. John Munro, a member of the parliament of Nova Scotia, sailed for Waipu with his family and a company of emigrants to the number of one hundred and seventy-six. In 1857 came the *Spray* with sixty-six, the *Breadalbane* followed with one hundred and twenty-nine more, and lastly in 1860 the *Ellen Lewis* brought about one hundred and eighty-eight colonists. Within less than a decade,

eight hundred and eighty persons left St. Ann's and settled in the new colony.

Norman lived for twelve years after the founding of the settlement, moulding and fashioning it as he had moulded and fashioned St. Ann's. Since music and song and sport formed no small part of its life, his rule could hardly be called puritanic, yet in many ways it was rigid, alcohol and tobacco both being prohibited. There was much secret rebellion in later days among the younger generation against Norman's strictness, yet the old man held them to the end. Even now, sixty years after his death, the mention of his name in the places that knew him best, calls forth such strong and diverse feelings that the stranger is warned to mention him warily. Among stories of his harshness and his oddities some secret of his personality eludes us that would fully account for the devotion he inspired. It is told of one of his people in St. Ann's that, after the old pastor's farewell visit, he took the door of his house off its hinges and cut a new aperture in the wooden wall, into which he fitted it, then blocked up the former opening so that no other man should ever cross the threshold by which 'Tormaid Mor' went out.

When he died, rather than see a stranger stand in his pulpit, his people broke it to bits, taking little pieces to their homes to be treasured as Catholics treasure the relics of a saint.

St. Ann's and Waipu still flourish. The former in its language and customs and simple mode of life has preserved the very atmosphere of the Scottish Highlands of an older day. Waipu has been swept by the winds of change, yet there too, the best in the old traditions has been preserved. All over their adopted land its sons have come to positions of influence; it is its boast that in proportion to its size it has given more schoolmasters and sea captains to the country than any other part of New Zealand. The story of its founding, of 'Tormaid Mor' and the six ships, of the long Odyssey which ended here of the pioneers whom 'neither danger nor hardship daunted,' is still told in many a prosperous New Zealand home. It is worthy, one feels, of its own remembered place in the annals of Scottish colonisation.

A COMPLETE TURN.

BY EARDLEY BESWICK.

It was in the great days of the English Music Halls, when the inspiration of the thing derived from taproom and basement kitchen rather than from speak-easy and from jungle. The cinematograph was still a bioscope, ranking no higher than a convenient last turn to be performed during the departure of a half-indifferent audience . . . and provincial managements held Competition Nights.

Invariably advertised as an effort to encourage 'local talent' the Competition made its contribution to both performers and audience at the expense of a few shillings prize-money, for while every entrant had his following of friends and relations, all optimistic to influence the destination of the prize-money by the fervour of their applause, the management were able to dispense with sundry highly paid artistes and thus, in the words of Frank Bellingham, 'to score at both ends.'

About an hour before the start of such a performance Bellingham, at that time manager of the Burnford *Empire*, was arranging the order of the competitors. He was assisted by old Pertwee, the conductor of the orchestra. Frank's foolish silver pencil straying down the list of entries paused. He looked up at Pertwee with a comical affectation of dolour.

'Number eight. Violin Solo! That's done it!' he remarked. 'That lad won't get the bird, he'll think every one of the gallery-boys has brought the family tom-cat. I'll have to put a couple of extra men up there to keep 'em in hand.'

Pertwee bent over the list. 'Beethoven!' he wailed. 'Andante Op. 61. That's the D Major Concerto. How old is he?'

'Measly little kid about sixteen,' groaned the manager.

A fervent 'My God!' was Pertwee's only comment.

'How do you stand for the accompaniment? I suppose you've got the score somewhere?'

'That'll be all right. We've all Beethoven,' Pertwee boasted, 'we often give them bits of him for the interlude.'

'First time I knew it. Should have thought you'd enough sense to stick to Sousa.'

'Must give them a bit of decent music sometimes. Besides, there's quite a lot of melody in Beethoven, you'll be surprised to learn. We pick out the pretty bits.' His tone was embittered. 'Play them nothing else if I had my way, but we've all got to live,' he concluded.

Bellingham made a big tick opposite 'No. 8, Violin Solo,' and they went on to the next item.

Entrant No. 7, a tall thin man with an encarmined nose and preposterous eyebrows, was beginning a comic song. He had already evoked a burst of jeers and cat-calls, which his supporters endeavoured to counter with applause, when No. 8, the 'measly little kid,' approached Bellingham in the wings.

'Say, Mister, do you think one of them gentlemen'—he waved a hand in the direction of the invisible orchestra—'Do you think one of them gentlemen would lend me a violin?'

'Chase me, Charley!' replied the manager, cocking one eyebrow in an ironical stare.

'I wouldn't do it any harm, sir. I'd hardly touch it.' A tear was threatening to streak a crimson patch on a face that nature had meant to look cheeky.

'D'you mean to tell me——' Bellingham began, but saw the tear and stopped. He had the usual over-developed 'heart' of the profession. Just at that moment the would-be comedian slunk off the stage overwhelmed by derisive noises. His friends had been outnumbered. Bellingham had to make a rapid decision. He signalled No. 9. 'Your turn now, my lad. Number 8's scratched,' he instructed.

'Don't be so 'ard,' implored the rejected. He might have guessed that Bellingham did not know how to be hard. Fortunately No. 9 was a monologue so they were able to send round for the conductor.

'Nice sort of a violinist,' grumbled Pertwee. 'Did you ever possess an instrument of your own?'

'Oh yes, sir,' the youngster assured him eagerly. 'Dad give me one when I was five.'

Pertwee stared at Bellingham and recognised that he too was alert to this implication of a prodigy. 'Well, and what's become of it?' he demanded.

'Feller hit me over the head with it and broke it.'

A sound between sob and hiccup renewed the assault on the managerial heart, and the matter was settled so far as Belling-

ham was concerned. 'See what you can do for him, old man,' he pleaded.

Very magnanimously then, they equipped the lad with a fiddle from the orchestra, and in due course he stood for the first time in the lonely centre of a stage with the limelight illuminating his cheap reach-me-down suit, his Sunday one, and the too-large patent boots with suede tops he had so obviously borrowed for the occasion. Pertwee, watching him closely, decided with a pang of exasperation that he was entirely inexpert at tuning a violin. He made all the customary adjustments, but seemed to be making them on the wrong strings. Yet somehow to the confounding of this initiate the customary sounds debouched, a little flat at first and then by successive tightenings right up to concert pitch. When the tuning operation was completed to the performer's satisfaction he turned towards the conductor and, with a precocious smirk, and a wave of the bow that Pertwee felt an insult, instructed him to start the accompaniment. He seemed so entirely at ease that the conductor was bewildered. It was incredible that a few minutes before this very youngster had been snivelling. Loathing him equally for each mood, Pertwee flicked at his men with the baton and they started the accompaniment. Within a few bars they ceased of their own accord, for the row he made was atrocious and the derision of the audience drowned their efforts with his. And at that the youngster laid down his instrument and nonchalantly approached the footlights.

He had retained the bow, which he waved at the audience in a manner so peremptory as to check the tumult. He then waved at Pertwee an instruction to start again. Oddly enough the outraged conductor felt constrained to humour him, though to do so violated his musicianly instincts. The coolness of the kid, he explained later, was so absolutely abnormal. A second wave was accompanied by a clear-voiced 'If you please, Mister Conductor!' that at once placed Pertwee in the wrong, for the audience with the music-hall patron's instinct to anticipate surprises, were now agog to see how the lad would carry it off. The obstinate Pertwee still hesitating, the competitor, handling his bow in an excessively mincing burlesque, pretended to play an imaginary fiddle, and to the astonishment of them all the first few bars of Op. 61 came forth clearly and accurately.

He ceased and grinned maliciously at Pertwee. The defeat was accepted. The baton again flicked the orchestra to life, and

for a time they drowned the performance in the inevitable manner of the halls. The test came at the solo part. The bow sawed across the empty cradle of his arm. The sound of violin music came, powerful and sweet, from where? Half of them undoubtedly suspected the vulgar trick of a double in the orchestra. Pertwee realised this and of course knew differently. Pertwee, the recently defeated, now made the gesture of a fine sportsman. After the first few bars of the solo he had all his strings standing up without their instruments. At least one witness, Bellingham, in the wings, achieved an emotional recognition of the old conductor's magnanimity, and Entrant No. 8 seemed to comprehend the gesture at once. He did more, and his precocity left the manager astounded. He projected its implication to the extent of eliminating the suspicion that a double might exist in the wings. It would have been well within the music-hall tradition, of course, if while a conviction of the genuineness of the imitation was establishing itself some rehearsed gauchery had exposed such a double fiddling away. A music-hall audience likes and expects to be fooled. But this precocious debutant clambered over the footlights, and old Pertwee handsomely assisted him through the orchestra and over the brass rail that divided them from the house. The solo went on all the time unblemished, and the effect culminated as the youngster walking up the gangway between the crowded seats resumed his pretence of scraping an imaginary fiddle.

It was a maxim with Bellingham that the best way of fooling an audience was just not to fool it at the very moment when it had resigned itself to enjoy such an attempt. Such subtleties played a considerable part in the higher technique of the Profession. That a point so recondite should be instinctively appreciated by a wholly untrained local errand-boy seemed at the moment more remarkable to the manager than even the uncannily accurate vocal reproduction of a not-too-easy violin solo, and Bellingham was too little the musician to find faults in this. Pertwee, who smiled afterwards to hear it described as 'a first-class rendering,' admitted it to be 'as good as most of what passes for violin-playing nowadays, for all that.'

The audience, at any rate, had no doubt of its merits, and their applause was so enthusiastic that Bellingham 'phoned the manager of the circuit and secured a grudging permission to engage the lad for a week provided he could be got to 'do the seven shows for a fiver.' There was little difficulty about that. A local tradesman

was at that time not unjustifiably begrudging him five shillings a week.

On the Monday night of the trial week when Bellingham took his customary look at the queues the sight set him jingling the contents of his trousers pockets. His big smooth face beaming prosperously, he looked up at the tall commissionaire and winked. 'My word, Jimmy,' he exclaimed rapturously, 'my word, if I catch you bending!'

The functionary returned his grin and his brocaded arm threw a wide gesture towards the street. 'What ho she bumps!' he announced in full sympathy.

It was their way of bandying the information that there would be a crowded house on the initial and generally the slackest night of the week. Success in this case was not wholly fortuitous, for the sensation of the competition had been well exploited, and a dash of mystery had been introduced by prolonging No. 8's anonymity. He was still only No. 8 on the bills and, with scarcely less prominence, in the columns of the local *Argus*. As a result rumour had persisted in identifying him incorrectly and some embarrassment and not a little controversy had arisen in this way.

The result was to be measured by the patient double files that stretched away from pit, gallery, and circle entrances to disappear round corners. The desirabilities of sweets and oranges were being vociferated from the kerb-side, and behind the vendors the lookers-on congested the roadway. Amongst all this babel a dingy violinist strode wildly up and down the gutter. At times his bow sawed fervently, its point stabbing at the night sky; at times he bent for it to hover delicately over a note while his left arm swept gutterwards as if in a gesture exaggerating homage. There was, moreover, a frenzy in the man so contrasted with the stolid audience that, as Bellingham afterwards remarked, one could not help noticing him apart altogether from the din he was making. The fiddler was no stranger. Bellingham, like the rest of Burnfordians, was accustomed to the sight of him performing less stressfully before the queues and outside the doors of public-houses to his kind dubiously hospitable. An exile from some mysterious mid-European state, his too exotic name had been simplified by the Burnfordians to a form within the range of local euphonies. They called him Marni.

Bellingham, watching the poor fellow sympathetically for a

few minutes, noticed that when the rare coppers fell ringing on the stones he would move towards them with a little pouncing stride, but would then stand covering the guerdon with an ill-shod foot until he had reached a point in the music he deemed consonant with a pause. At one more lavish instant two coppers fell simultaneously. They lay wide apart, but the lank fiddler got a foot on each and stood there swaying grotesquely as he played. With kindly malice Bellingham fished a coin from his trousers pocket, it happened to be a shilling, and tossed it down. Marni's black eyes flung him a hateful glance as, obviously unwilling, he ceased playing to retrieve this unusual largesse. The crowd roared mixed appreciation of generosity and jest, and with a snarl Marni resumed his playing.

'Rum beggar!' Bellingham commented to the commissioner as he turned to go in.

'Wish he'd play something a bit more cheerful.'

'Doesn't seem to enthuse them much, does it?' Bellingham was thinking of his patrons.

'Gives one the fair hump.' The other was concerned with his own reactions. 'Looks as if he was half-bottled to-night. Never seen him like this before.'

Marni's playing had failed to depress the manager. As he went his way through the big empty theatre to his pokey office behind a stone stair his hands still jingled the contents of his pockets and his jaunty stride fluttered the tails of his coat.

He remained in the office until the doors opened and the house began to fill. Every seat was sold by the time the orchestra started to tune up, and when Bellingham's presence was urgently demanded at the box-office the standing-room was so crowded that he had to fight his way through a throng obviously in excess of that permitted by the authorities. When he reached the foyer he found the big commissioner moving slowly forward with his arms spread in an effort to drive Marni into the street.

'What-what! What's all this?' demanded Bellingham.

'Blighter wants a seat. Aren't no seats, I keep telling of him.' The commissioner was a little breathless.

Marni thrust hand into bulging pocket, drew it forth spilling coppers and thrust it towards the manager. 'Here is my money. Is is not as good as other men's money?' he demanded dramatically.

'No use, old man. Sold right out. There isn't even standing

room. Reserve you a seat for to-morrow.' Bellingham tried to soothe him.

'I can pay. I can pay for the best seat in the house. All day long I have earned it and now you tell me my money not so good as another man's. I want a seat, a front seat, I tell you!' For emphasis he struck the hand with the coins violently against his other palm and the rest of his day's earnings scattered about the steps.

Bellingham noticed a solitary piece of silver once his own. The fiddler scrambled about like a monkey to recover them, muttering obscurely as he did so. Bellingham found it rather pathetic. 'You want to see the show, eh?' he enquired superfluously while a thought matured.

'I want to see the he-devil you call No. 8,' declared Marni grimly, and then as an afterthought, 'I taught him, once.'

'A friend of one of the artistes, eh? Well I don't know that I mightn't stretch a point. Suppose you go round to the stage door——'

Marni interrupted him by making a dive under the commissioner's arm. He was swiftly arrested.

'Shall I try chucking him out again, or shall I send for the police?' asked the commissioner. 'He only comes back again,' he added doubtfully.

The idea had occurred to Bellingham before, but he had remembered the standing-room regulations. The last thing he wanted was to interest the police in his night's business. 'Now look here, my lad.' He laid a persuasive hand on the fiddler's shoulder. 'Suppose you go round to the stage door. Go quietly, there's a good boy, and Uncle Frank will fix you up in the wings. Honest Injun!'

The surprising fiddler succumbed. 'You look a good man. I will go to the stage door, yes. Here is my money.' He tried to cram his recovered savings into Bellingham's hand.

The manager rejected the security. 'Never mind about that. Uncle Frank will rub along without your day's takings.' He glimpsed a look on the face of the commissioner. 'Suppose you just hand this gentleman a shilling for the trouble you have given him.'

Marni selected the shilling and held it out. 'Here you are——' he began, and paused as the coin passed from him. '—you soulless pig!' he concluded violently and was gone, leaving the other staring blankly at the coin in his unshut fist.

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Unfortunately when, escorted by his new protector, Marni arrived behind the scenes his alleged pupil was already there swaggering about in an evening suit they had hired for him. The youngster grinned a contemptuous greeting. Marni shook his fist imminently beneath the other's nose.

'Look here, old man, got to behave yourself round here, you know. Should have thought you'd know how to be polite to a man that's taught you.' Bellingham admonished both in turn.

'What you want to bring him round here for? He only wants to queer my show. The dirty old gut-scraper.' He turned to Marni. 'You go along home and play to the lodgers,' he sneered.

There was obviously gall in the advice. Marni sprang at him and before Bellingham could get between them his foul fingers had sullied the gloss of the new collar and the shining expanse of shirt front. One or two stage hands hauled Marni off as decorously as possible, for by that time there was a turn on. The youngster gazed helplessly at the ruin of his finery and turned his back towards them, his shoulders shaking. Bellingham helped the stage hands to bundle Marni along in the direction of his office, where, attributing it all to the effects of drink, they got him out a bottle of whisky and locked the door on him. It was one of Bellingham's not too unpractical beliefs that the best way to quieten a drunken man was to encourage him to drink himself to sleep.

After that things went more prosperously. The purchase of fresh linen assuaged No. 8 and by the time his turn arrived he had recovered to a degree that ensured a fresh triumph. In fact it was one of those rare nights when every turn goes well. Bellingham, immersed in the easy business of the evening and lulled by the gratifications of a crowded and enthusiastic house, forgot about Marni until the long interval. When he unlocked the door he found the fiddler with his head on the blotting-pad, weeping, and a not excessive amount of whisky missing. So rather than have any renewal of trouble he locked him in again and forgot him until after the show. Actually it was a long while after, for he did not attempt to resist the temptation to celebrate a good night's business with the artistes. It was past midnight when he at last implemented a recognition of his responsibilities as jailer by again unlocking the office door.

Marni was asleep and the whisky no further reduced. Actually the fiddler did not normally drink, and the half of Bellingham's evening libation would have sufficed him for a carouse. Belling-

ham, far from suspecting this, woke him and gave him another. Then Marni began to talk, that is he set about cursing No. 8 in half the languages of Central Europe.

'Keep your hair on, my dear chap,' Bellingham advised him genially. Marni paused as if seriously considering this advice.

'They hiss him, eh!' he enquired hopefully.

'Hiss him my foot!' said Bellingham. 'They ate him.'

This puzzled Marni for a time. 'He is a devil, that boy,' he confided at length. 'Years ago I break a violin on him.'

'Years ago?' enquired the surprised Bellingham. 'I thought that happened yesterday!'

'Years ago, I say, and perhaps I did not wish to hurt him then. It was a truly despicable instrument, that.' He paused dreamily. 'I wish I kill him that time though. He was only so high. A nasty, snotty little kid,' he concluded.

'I'm glad you didn't,' said Bellingham fervently. 'He's a little bit of orlright, that kid is. He's going to the top of the bill for the rest of the week, so how the other artistes take it.'

'Pah!' cried Marni. 'He only an imitation and he imitate ME. It is a trick in his throat. It is not music, that! People get tired of imitation quickly. People never get tired of real music.'

'Music my foot!' demurred the manager, speaking from the assurances of a lifetime's experience of the music halls.

'It's a novelty. How long do they last, the novelties?'

The question evoked a doubt that had been troubling Bellingham that evening as he watched the lad's performance.

'I'll agree with you that that sort of turn can't go on drawing for ever. Not enough variety in it. It'll go stale all right inside six months. Once round the circuit and good-bye to the limelight, I'm afraid. However, we're going to make hay while the sun shines.'

Marni looked at him with eager eyes. 'You let me play to them. I play them off their feet. They forget him. Real music they like better every time, for every time it mean something more to them.'

Bellingham did not want to hurt the other's feelings. To change the subject he began to pump Marni for the story of the mimic. 'You seem to know him pretty well,' he said. 'Where did you come across him? Here, let's have another for luck.'

In an hour or so Bellingham had acquired much information.

Not at first very coherent, it needed to be supplemented by enquiry, and it is significant that within a few days he was sufficiently interested to pursue such enquiries for their own sake. He learnt that the fiddler lived at a common lodging-house, a graceless stony barracks of a place even for Burnford. As a member of a coroner's jury Bellingham had once inspected the premises after a murder there. He remembered them with loathing, and during his rare attacks of pessimism he would terrify himself by imagining them the refuge of an age-and-poverty-stricken Frank Bellingham. Indigence had driven Marni there when, by his own showing a sensitive and fastidious failure, he had first drifted to Burnford. Although the same cause had never been lacking for him to continue to inhabit those grim walls, it did not take him long to discover a more congenial inducement, for it was in this unlikely spot that he had first experienced a measure of public recognition for his personality and his talent. Apparently he had established some sort of ascendancy both with the management and the clients of the place, and was in the habit of playing to his fellow-lodgers at times when neither work, liquor, nor other distraction was available. Bellingham concluded that his music must have helped to restrain them from killing one another too freely.

For these people there must have been a semblance of austerity about Marni. He rarely got drunk, and from the first he refused the coveted offers of an occasional free bed in return for assistance with the ghastly routine of cleansing the place. They attributed all this, no doubt, to remembrance of the better days he had so obviously known, but the truth was that he found that alcohol upset the precision of his bowing, and he was too careful of his wrists and fingers to desensitise these by manual work. He would keep them supple, though he was careless to keep them clean. To Bellingham it was an astonishing revelation that over some twelve years of street-playing for his miserable living, and God knows what cruelty of sneers and rebuffs before that, the fellow had kept intact a belief in his own supremacy among the great violinists of his period. Nor could one attribute any defection from his assumptions to lack of assiduity. On most mornings he would lounge about the common room practising, harried from corner to corner by a slattern's floorcloth swirling foul suds about his needy feet. At such times and in such a place he must have been an excruciating nuisance, but they endured him. Perhaps

the fact of his rarely getting drunk prejudiced them in his favour, and it may be that, as Bellingham had surmised, he did help to smooth out those who were less restrained than himself.

The proprietor had a son, the 'nasty snotty little kid,' and right from the start of the daily practice in the common room this urchin had discovered a *flair* for imitating violin noises vocally. At first the musician was delighted. He knew it rare to find so acute an ear even among children of twice the age of this mimic. Obviously the child would repay teaching. He rejoiced in the prospect of a worthy pupil—we may be assured that he would never have agreed to impart his art to a mediocrity.

About this time he affectionately endowed the infant with a name more euphonious than that of his baptism. He invented for him the diminutive form of Marnetti, prophesying complacently that it would one day be famous.

The enthusiastic proprietor bought for his son a half-sized violin, and this was the instrument that Marni, lacking the patience of a successful pedagogue, and with a complete ignorance of juvenile psychology, exasperated broke about his pupil's infant head. His excuse to Bellingham that 'it was truly a despicable instrument, that,' shows how far he failed to appreciate the implications of his savagery. Of course Marnetti was thereafter a disappointment to his tutor, and though it is too much to say that his hatred was from then incurable, we have evidence that the assault was never forgotten. For a time the musician endeavoured to recover goodwill by encouraging in the youngster imitations that he had always found irksome. If he hoped thereby to induce him to resume his lessons he met with no success. By no means could the child be got to take further interest in the technique of the violin. It was as if while he retained a passion for its noises their mechanism repelled him. So Marni was forced to leave him to develop his ear for himself, which he did unremittingly by means that were henceforth purely vocal.

As the years went by the imitations became more and more perfect, for the growing exasperation of the musician stimulated Marnetti's natural talent. The moanings of a non-existent violin about the stone stairs and landings of that incredibly dismal building plagued Marni at length to such a pitch that he was driven to wander about the streets when he ought to have been practising. But it was not until the youngster reached the stage of imitating in full the simpler pieces with which Marni used to entertain his

fellow-lodgers that the trouble became acute, for the lodgers at once thought more of the imitations than of the original, and Marni was furiously jealous. It is not hard to understand his reaction later, when the loathed imitator at one almost casual step attained a public and an adulation from both of which the un-remitting genius seemed to be for ever debarred, nor was he even at that earlier time to be expected to face unmoved the filching of his sole appreciative audience.

If ever he had expected a romantic recognition of his talent in the gutter he must have long been disillusioned. He was probably the worst-remunerated street fiddler in seven counties. He cynically told Bellingham that his patrons consisted exclusively of children, drunken men and deaf old ladies. Yes, he had the bravery for that amount of irony. He was too much the musician consciously to play down to an audience and obviously the real reason he did so poorly in the streets was that he never condescended to the purely sentimental. Street fiddlers are alleged to grow rich on repertoires limited to 'The Lost Chord' and 'The Broken Melody,' with 'Ave Maria' and 'Lead Kindly Light' for Sunday use, to descend no lower in the scale of popular taste. Marni used to give them Mozart and Bach, and that was what they used to applaud in the common lodging-house until the detested Marnetti, with his mincing strut and his elaborately imitatorial bowing, unworthily eclipsed his model.

Bellingham parted from Marni somewhere about three o'clock of a drizzling morning outside the theatre, each comfortably drunk according to his measure. Despite the drizzle it was a long parting. Marni was still insistent on being allowed to do a turn in opposition to the boy. They separated at length on a compromise, Bellingham promising that Pertwee should give the fiddler an audition during the morning.

The manager had forgotten his promise by the time he again arrived at the theatre. But Marni had not. He was there long before a not too robust Bellingham appeared, unprepared for additional worries and inclined to be peevish about auditions. Fortunately it happened that Pertwee and one or two of his men had foregathered to practise a score for a Sunday charity concert, and at last Marni got his chance.

After listening for a while Pertwee gravely stopped the audition while he sent a messenger to his rooms for a violin that he par-

ticularly treasured. 'My friend,' he said to Marni, 'that violin is not good enough for you.'

Marni regarded the instrument tenderly. 'It was a fine instrument once, but like its master it has played in the open for twelve years,' he said simply.

'Why in the open?' asked the conductor. 'You are good enough to get a job in an orchestra at any time.'

'Pah!' said Marni contemptuously. 'I could have played in Hallé's any day.'

'Then why on earth didn't you?' broke in Bellingham.

'Me?' screamed the street fiddler. 'I am a soloist. I do not play second to scrapers! I could have had orchestral work in Germany where they understand music, but always I tell them, "No, I am a soloist. I will not play second to anyone." I will not play in quartettes. I play concertos or nothing. They are jealous. They want to keep me out. All musicians are the same, I tell you. They are jealous of the artist that is better than they. "Very well," I tell them at the conservatoire, "I will not play in Germany. I will go to England and play concertos, and if, as is said, the English do not know good music, still I will rather play in the streets than in the orchestra."' "

Bellingham turned a helpless look on Pertwee. 'My sainted aunt! Did you hear that?' he demanded and turning to Marni, 'Why, you swollen-headed dago, do you mean to tell me you set yourself up above regular salaried musicians like Mr. Pertwee here, a man that's got a regular well-paid job? Let me tell you, Mr. Pertwee played in this very orchestra for years before he conducted it, and was glad to, while he was learning the business, weren't you, old man?'

'Glad enough, Frank,' admitted Pertwee sadly, 'but you mustn't think I was ever as good as this chap. Mind you, I don't know quite how good he is yet. All I know is that he is in a different street from me. There was a time when I used to think I was going to set them alight, I'll admit, but I've learnt my limitations since then.' He observed the return of his messenger. 'Now you can have a go with a violin that is a violin,' he told Marni.

When the audition was over Pertwee sought Bellingham in the little office under the stairs to which he had escaped from the 'noise' he held them to be making. Bellingham looked up as he entered. 'Well? What do you make of him now? Another Paganini, eh?'

'He's quite exceptionally good. How good it is hard to say. I don't know that he's right in the first flight, but, by God, he's near it.' He returned Bellingham's amazed stare solemnly for a while, then took a seat and placing his elbows on the edge of the desk leant his head on his clasped hands.

'I don't see what it's got to do with me,' Bellingham began argumentatively.

'But Frank, old man, we've got hold of an extraordinarily fine musician.'

'Fat lot of good! I'd rather we'd got hold of an extraordinary fine white elephant,' grumbled Bellingham. 'They aren't supposed to be much use, but we could make one do a turn, and that's more than we can make out of Mr. Marni.'

'I don't know, Frank, that No. 8 chap's done all right and he isn't a patch on Marni.'

'That's different. He doesn't play the violin, he's an imitator. You can't run a music hall on the sort of stuff they give you at chamber concerts, my lad. Beethoven and all that! Don't want to hurt your feelings, old man. Of course your stuff's a damn sight too good for them. . . . What do you say to a livener? I've a throat like a limekiln this morning.'

Bellingham had a terrible time between the two of them after that audition. Pertwee was a nuisance to him in the theatre and when he escaped from there it was to be haunted by the sound of Marni's violin from the doorstep of his accustomed hostelry. In order to stave off further attempts to spoil Marnetti's triumph he had weakly committed himself to 'seeing what he could do' for Marni. This intentionally vague promise had at the hands of Marni and Pertwee become subtly transformed into something bindingly concrete. Even when he was conscious of 'seeing what he could do' very assiduously, the pair succeeded in making him feel forsworn. He knew he had no defined intention of doing anything for Marni, and yet all the time he was somehow aware of an underlying excitement in the situation. Perhaps he sensed that in some incomprehensible manner the chance of a lifetime was eluding him. But to put Marni on was out of the question. His circuit manager would never consent to it, would think him mad to suggest it. Nevertheless he did not doubt that the fellow was a genius—he could trust Pertwee there—and the prospect of making old Frank Bellingham the discoverer of a genius was vaguely enticing.

Marni's proper field was, of course, on the big concert platforms, any success there being conditioned by that very lack of sentimentality that appeared to deny him a future on the halls. But to Bellingham, naturally, success on the halls was supreme, and in any case he had no pull with the genuine musical people, for that his world and theirs were too strictly divided. He appreciated too that this would mean just handing Marni over to someone else to discover, and if his altruism fell short of that we must remember that after all his profession was the exploiting of other people's talent.

He did nevertheless ask Pertwee, 'D'you think, old man, if we could get them to let us give him a week's run we could drop a hint to one of the big conductor johnnies to drop in and hear his turn?'

Pertwee was strangely bitter towards the higher musical profession. He secretly wanted to use Marni for the raising of the musical standard of the halls, wanted the pundits of the musical world to realise that the concert rooms had no monopoly of fine talent. 'They'd be too jealous. If once he performed for the halls he'd be damned as far as they're concerned, and a good thing too.'

Bellingham at that gave a gesture as if despairingly resigning the whole problem. He had much else to think about. There was the launching of No. 8, for example, and the problem of so equipping him that he might become something more than a short-life turn. Here again there was a performance the basis of which was too limited, which lacked the possibility of variety, and had no appeal to the sentimental that could be relied on to endure. To add to his difficulties, the lad had somehow sensed his interest in Marni and was opposing it by all the means in his power. This was the final exasperation. All these damn fiddlers 'getting at' him, and now this measly little mimic not content with all that had been done for him, must needs begin snapping at his heels too.

'Confound you both,' he snapped back at Marnetti. 'If you don't leave me alone I'll—I'll put the two of you on together and let you fight it out before the audience.'

Marnetti weighed this, looking at him shrewdly, a light kindling in his sharp little eyes. 'Come to think of it, you might do worse than that, Mister Bellingham,' was his self-assured verdict.

Bellingham always took to himself the credit for the idea. He was certainly the first to mention it but, as it became clear to him that a successful turn might be compounded out of their

diversities, he became amazed at his own perspicacity. Within a week the idea obsessed him, and in place of his being rendered desperate by the persistence of the musician, his ally, and his mimic, he it was that importuned them.

It required a full measure of enthusiasm and persistence. There were many false starts and revulsions, many bickerings and reconciliations, Heaven knows how much involved diplomacy, before an amalgamation was effected, and a partnership established on the not over-secure basis of Marni's jealousy coupled with his lust for recognition, and of Marnetti's hatred coupled with his unashamed meretriciousness.

Pertwee, who drops out of the story at this point, consummated his devotion by equipping Marni with an instrument adequate for his anticipated triumphs—the identical fiddle that had emerged from the dinginess of a bed-sitting-room for the purpose of the crucial audition. It became Marni's most cherished possession. The rest was merely a matter of details in which lawyers, costumiers, and the opulent controllers of the circuit performed their undistinguished parts.

The sort of performance they used to rely on varied a good deal as, of course, was necessary to retain their appeal to the music-hall public, but the primary ingredients were by the nature of the thing invariable. Frank's original conception proved a sound basis for all subsequent variations, and may be taken as the type.

Marni first of all, tuning up. Marnetti then pretending to tune up and evoking roars of applause for the magnificently imitated fiddle noises, and of laughter for his antics. He had more than a little of the slum child's natural *flair* for low comedy, and many thought his skill as a comedian underrated in the profession, but to people like Frank Bellingham the mere comic ability was a commonplace. Practically everyone on the halls possessed it in those days. At this stage it provided the essential that Bellingham always insisted on, namely that Marnetti should score first. If the imitator failed to provide the necessary fuel for Marni's jealousy, then, no matter how technically perfect the subsequent performance, the turn would fall flat. There came a time when anticipation of failure would stimulate Marnetti to improvise new goads for his partner's flagging animosity, and this he succeeded in doing with an ingenuity that demonstrated a surprising natural talent for cruelty.

To resume, after Marnetti's preliminary achievement Marni, with that slow sneering smile as of one so certain of ultimate triumph, would woo the audience with some gay simple air . . . a transfigured Marni in a sombre velvet cloak, his black fiddler's ringlets curling over his flared collar, and all the contrast of his dead-white face and his sharp-white stock against the blackness. Thereupon Marnetti in too superlative evening clothes, with his glossy linen, his glossy hair brushed right back, and his cheeky gamin's face shining as if from soap and insufficient water, but really, no doubt, from grease-paint applied with just that purpose of enhanced puerility. . . . Marnetti then, an incredibly varnished product, fiddleless but with a bow to saw in the empty cradle of his bent arm, would mouth the air with his outrageously accurate mimicry, repeating Marni's performance to the last thin reed of sound, the last fine flourish of the bow.

Marni meanwhile, pacing the stage, 'registering' his always unfeigned sense of outrage, and sometimes indeed unable to endure to that same conclusive flourish—Bellingham always said he did better if he could hold himself in until Marnetti had achieved his due applause—Marni at length breaking in with his expostulation, 'Impostor! Guttersnipe!' Marnetti's smirking bow, 'Very well, gut-scaper, but suppose we let the audience judge between us!' and with this stepping over the footlights—he had no need to scramble in those days, they had laid a crimson carpet as if for royalty on the line of his advance—and nonchalantly delivering his 'better than most of what passes for violin-playing' into the very centre of the auditorium, removing the last shred of suspicion as to his genuineness, and inevitably bearing back his earned applause. Marni during all this reduced to stalking up and down, his face working, his eyes devilish—it is doubtful if he was ever wholly acting at this stage—at length crying out some such challenge as 'Try this then, guttersnipe!' and dashing into that masterly *tour-de-force* of his—no one seemed to know what it was he played at these climaxes. Bellingham used to insist it was improvised. At any rate it was the sort of thing that but for skilful preparation the audience would not have supported for two minutes. As it was anyone who heard it would testify that it seldom failed to grip them . . . it and Marni's passion.

During the usually ensuing long burst of applause Marnetti would introduce his final and most effective piece of 'business.' No longer the cheeky boy, his face awed and solemn, visible tears

in his eyes, he would advance towards his pallid conqueror and bowing raise the thin fingers to his lips as if humbly to solicit forgiveness. Flummery, of course. A perilously near approach to the steep descent that is bathos, but how consummately he used to bring it off, and how it inevitably tripled the applause! One might be forgiven, knowing what must have been in his heart at the time, for concluding that that final gesture of Marnetti's was as perfect a thing in its lesser way as Marni's most inspired, most vivid playing. Bellingham was convinced that Marni never ceased to be flattered by it, and, for the moment of his triumph at least, to forgive.

For a time all went outrageously well with the turn and its sponsor. Marni and Marnetti won immense success with the public. They had the luck that their advent on the London halls should occur during the wild youth of a new journalism that was avid of news-values and alert for 'human' stories. They were the ideal material for such a Press, which was quick to gloss their earlier Burnford associations and to exaggerate jointly the genius and the romance of the ex-street fiddler. No matter how much its excesses might provoke the sneers of the genuinely musical, who in time came to rate Marni's playing very high indeed in a class that was not the highest, its views had weight with the public which those of the genuinely musical had not. Bellingham thoroughly understood how to make use of such tides as these. He shared their publicity, delighted to be esteemed as the solitary genius to recognise fine music in the gutter where thousands had passed ignoring it. Within a year he was appointed manager of the *Pilastrium*, one of the greatest of the metropolitan halls. A position of much contemporary splendour, it enabled him to watch over his protégés, and it provided large opportunities to forward their popularity through the activities of gossipmongers and paragraphists. He had a strong pull here, for to be manager of one of the major houses of amusement in pre-cinema days ensured a familiarity with stars and their titled acquaintances that could supply the very bread of life to gossip writers.

Bellingham was too intensely an enthusiast to remain at white heat for long, and as he cooled, though still devoted to the turn, he began to admit doubts of its future. He realised at last the exceeding narrowness of the basis of the thing on the perpetual response of Marni's jealousy to a stimulus that had in the nature

of things to be progressively intensified, for jealousy, even of Marni's measure, could not be expected to remain permanently incapable of fatigue. Again events justified him. Before the second year of the partnership was ended the fiddler was exhibiting an embarrassing affection for Marnetti. This not only showed itself in flagging enthusiasm for his own applause, but in efforts to provide an apportionment of their glory more equitable as regards his partner, whose only reply lay obviously in the direction of a more robust and virulent cruelty. These symptoms deeply disturbed Frank Bellingham. In a panic he arranged an American trip for them and while they were away, his mind requiring no doubt some compensatory interest, he conceived the idea of a whole orchestra of imitated instruments. He ultimately made considerable progress with this idea, going so far as to establish a school for training the necessary talent.

The American trip was a failure, but it gave Marnetti some ideas for introducing variety into their performance, and on their return they planned to go out on the circuit with renewed vitality. Bellingham was at first far from optimistic. He had a long talk with Marnetti and tried to interest him in his orchestral scheme. Marnetti was unimpressed, or rather he seemed inclined to resent the idea of such a talent as his being developed in others. On the subject of Marni he was eloquent.

'You know I never did like the fellow, but damned if I wasn't nearer liking him when he was swollen-headed and full of bounce about his solo-playing, than I am now with him snivelling in private and letting the show down in public. The things he's playing 'em now would send the whole Queen's Hall to sleep. I have to guy him in the middle of them to keep the gallery from chipping in and giving us the bird. You know how mad he used to be if anyone interrupted his business. Now all he does is just to smile tearfully at you like a milk-and-bun curate. He's a slouch!'

Bellingham spoke to Marni too, clumsily trying to revive his jealousy. He was without the subtlety for success in such a rôle. He recalled Burnford scenes, only to make Marni weep and declare he would return there and play in the streets where he now imagined he had always been recognised and happy.

In the end Bellingham's reinflated optimism drove them out on the circuit again, Marni promising to play 'as if his life depended on it,' and Marnetti with all his pluck and devilment most desperately uninspired. And for a time things went better than might

have been expected, Bellingham congratulating himself on having stopped the rot. Then reports from the provinces began to indicate a falling off, and one day a telegram arrived from Marnetti.

'For Heaven's sake come and ginger him up' [it pleaded].
'Am about through.'

He caught the next train and arrived in the theatre shortly before their performance. He refrained from informing them that he had arrived, preferring before he 'had it out' with them to witness the turn and satisfy himself that things were as bad as the telegram implied. He had still a great confidence in Frank Bellingham's powers of diagnosis and prescription in such cases. He therefore bought a seat in the usual way and sought the promenade at the back of the circle, where, leaning against the brass rail, he watched the performance.

Marni tuned up dreamily. It was obvious that he had no heart for the business of the turn. Marnetti, on the other hand, performed his preliminary mimicry with a zest that gave to the violinist's sombre lassitude the value of a defined contrast. 'Good lad!' applauded Bellingham inwardly.

Marni's opening piece was this time neither gay nor simple. It was technical music and strangely unimpressive—at least Bellingham found it so, and the audience were obviously bored. Marnetti too started solemnly, but his exaggerations soon turned the thing into a florid burlesque. This was good but dangerous. 'Don't overdo it, Laddy!' Bellingham silently admonished him, and to his delight the mimic, as if in response, began to give queer twists to the music, gliding from the slow sad strains into the terminal phrases of the latest comic songs. This was excellent and brought him ripples of applause. Obviously he was gaining ground, recovering their jeopardised popularity single-handed.

But instead of striding wildly about the stage during his partner's business, Marni stood stock-still, leaned slightly forward and smiled inanely. It was more deadly than his fiercest scowl had ever been and Bellingham reckoned it halved the value of Marnetti's effort. A little co-operation here and the turn would have fully come to life, but when the mimic had finished the fiddler seemed deliberately to step right out of it. He advanced, bowing, and announced that, with their permission, he would play the audience a little-known composition of the great John Sebastian Bach.

It was obviously a surprise move to Marnetti, something quite outside the scope of their rehearsals, but he strove to rise to the occasion by announcing a well-known composition 'by little Fido Bark, Bow-wow!' which was good enough impromptu for a music-hall audience and had them in a favourable mood again at once.

But the odds were too great. In spite of Marnetti's efforts the turn was slowing up. Marni was now playing. Playing as if, in a dream, he were back in the streets of Burnford and his audience the indifferent passers-by. Technically it was, no doubt, equal to his best, indeed there were violinists in the orchestra ready to assure Bellingham later that they had never heard him play better. But all the fire, the fury of exasperated jealousy, that the turn needed to consummate its appeal was missing. This emotionless perfection of technique with its complete subordination of personality merely bored the house.

Marnetti parodied him, mocked him, ineffectively goaded him in pantomime. He even tried to accompany him, but the piece, he asserted later, was a new one on him. Bellingham did not witness his final outrage. Unable to bear the atmosphere of the house as the curtain approached, he made his way to the wings.

He arrived there just as Marnetti, vibrant with indignation, blundered from the stage. He was crying. At the sight of Bellingham he turned up his wet eyes hopelessly and raised both hands as if to protest his innocence. From the house behind the curtain came dreaded noises. The audience were administering 'the bird.'

'I did everything I could think of, Mr. Bellingham,' he sobbed. 'Every damn thing! Did you see me kick the blighter? I didn't care what I did. Nothing could have made it any worse. I felt like smashing his damn fiddle, but without that he wouldn't have been able to carry on at all. *He* can't play without a fiddle.' He ended with a whimsical note even in his despair.

'You did your damndest, old boy. Nobody's going to blame you. Your part was all Sir Garnet,' Bellingham assured him. He turned to Marni who was dreamily coming off, caressing his violin with a piece of black velvet. 'What in Hell do you think you were doing? Playing for a funeral? Funeral of the turn all right!' he stormed.

Marni turned solemnly towards him. 'Uncle Frank, is it my fault that he spoil my good music? I have known him since he was a little boy and truly I would lay down my life for him, but it hurt me when he spoil my good music.' He moved a few steps

towards Marnetti and his arms implored. He still held the violin in one hand, the bow in the other, and this gave to his gesture the air of an oblation. 'Do not be upset at what I say. I forgive you always. I want to be always your friend. You have a fine talent. I could have wished it were for the violin, but since it is for that other, let us develop it. You can play easy things with that strange throat of yours. Let me help you and we will end this imitation business. We will make great music, together! I will teach you the masterpieces of John Sebastian Bach, and we will play them together across the world. Eh?'

The obsessed blindness of the man, his oblivion to the desperate urgencies of the situation, to all the overwhelm of practical issues, and above everything his naïve patronage, exasperated Marnetti. For answer he snatched the treasured fiddle, Pertwee's fiddle, and in frenzy brought it smashing down upon Marni's head.

HOURS IN UNDRESS.

VII. POETS' APRIL.

THE first verse in English poetry speaks of April; the first substantive word is its name:

'Whan that Aprille with his showres sote
The droghte of Marche hath perced to the rote, . . .
Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
The tender croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halfe cours y-ronne,
And smale fowles maken melodye,
That slepen al the night with open yē
(So priketh hem Nature in hir corages):
Than longen folk to goon on pilgrimages'—

and particularly, when Edward III was King, folk in England longed to go to Canterbury.

Where did Chaucer get it from in the fourteenth century, this association of the human urge with common nature's, and this catalogue of young desires in April? Possibly, but not very probably, from direct observation of phenomena in the neighbourhood of Thames Street, in London, where he was born in or about 1340, and where his father died in 1366. Not very probably, we conjecture, because the London boy, so far as his biographers know, did not spend much time in rural scenes. He was a member of a Royal household in early youth; he served at home and abroad in diplomatic offices; and in 1372 he was resident in Italy on a trade mission. A year or two afterwards he was controlling wool at a Customs-house in the Port of London. None of these activities, of course, shut him out from the countryside, or prevented him from observing for himself the seasonal changes which he recorded in the opening verses of the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*. But there was no Horton period in his experience, as there was in that of the later Londoner, John Milton, and, somehow, the form of these verses suggests a more indirect approach. 'Zephirus' and 'the Ram' were bookmen's nature, even in England and even

at that date, and the general names of the 'crops' and the 'fowls' do not indicate personal attention. No doubt Chaucer did not simulate the feeling. He did feel it in his blood,—that common singing and aspiring, at the 'Tabard Inn,' in April, 1387. But he could not have said it in so few words, and with so admirable a selection of things seen, if other poets had not said it before him; if, in the French or Latin books, on which he lifted himself out of his medieval framework, he had not found, ready for use, the short list of phenomena of springtide. Perhaps there was no single source. One writer had taken it from another, till it had become a literary convention. But Chaucer's folk longing to go on pilgrimage, when the sap was rising in the trees, and the soil was softening to the sun, were not new in the poetic models at his disposal. Catullus in the first century, B.C., had said the same thing in almost the same words:

'iam ver egelidos refert tepores,
iam caeli furor aequinoctialis
iucundis Zephyri silescit auris . . .
iam mens praetrepidans avet vagari.'

If we turn back to Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules* (birds), which is earlier than the *Canterbury Tales*, we see even more clearly how the father of English poetry put his offspring out to foreign nursing-mothers. Its delightful opening ('The lyf so short, the craft so long') is familiar from Hippocrates to Longfellow, and is most trite in its Latin form, *ars longa, vita brevis*. In the fifth stanza of the *Parlement*, Chaucer mentions his copy of a book, 'Tullius of the Dream of Scipioun,' which was, or should have been, a part of Book VI of Cicero's *de Republica*. Somehow, it had got detached from that work, and was preserved fragmentarily by Macrobius, about five hundred years afterwards, as the *Somnium Scipionis*, accompanied by a commentary. Whether for the merit of the commentary or for the glamour of Cicero's name, it was used as the starting-place of the dream-motive in modern literature. Every poet went to sleep in Tully's arms, and the greatest dream-poem of the lot, the French *Roman de la Rose* of the thirteenth century, became an apprentice-piece of the muse in every European language. Chaucer partly translated it, and out of it he took many hints and some figures of poetry for English readers. His list of trees in the *Parlement*, for example, is much in debt to the French *Roman*:

'The builder oak, and eke the hardy ash;
 The pillar-elm, the coffin unto carrion;
 The boxtree pipe; the holm to whippe's lash;
 The sailing fir; the cypress, death to plain¹;
 The shooter-yew; the ash for shaftës plain;
 The olive of peace, and eke the drunken vine,
 The victor-palm; the laurel to divine' . . .

Here, surely, with the possible exception of the pagan epithets for the laurel and the vine, is a picture of our own countryside, with its oaken beams, its elm props and coffins, its boxwood pipes, its holly handles, its pine masts, its bows of yew, and the cypresses in its churchyards. And, indeed, it is an English scene which Chaucer's genius expresses. But every item is borrowed from abroad. For behind the French romancers in the century before Chaucer and Boccaccio, similar passages of tree-lore are discovered in Latin poets, at least as distant as Ovid.

The birds themselves in the *Parlement* have a long classical lineage. The 'dove with her meek eyes' is common to many countries, but 'the jealous swan, ayens his death that singeth,' the sad owl, 'that of death the bode bringeth,' and the cock, 'that orloge is of thorpe's light,'² had their characters told by the Greeks and Romans. In fact, there is only one bird in the whole parliament of fowls whose epithet surprises the commentators. They cannot find that anyone before Chaucer had ever called the throstle 'old.' Even so, it is not a very notable contribution to ornithology. And note here another point. These birds in Chaucer's poem are busy making love—

'For this was on Saint Valentynes day,
 When every fowl cometh there to choose his mate,'—

and the association of St. Valentine with the birds was of respectable antiquity. So we may find a direct link between Chaucer's throstle and George Meredith's:

'I know him, February's thrush,
 And loud at eve he valentines.'

Truly, our English trees and birds have acquired stock epithets through the centuries, which they owe less to observation than to the tradition of the muse.

¹ To lament death.

² Clock of the village dawn.

We turn from birds to flowers. If there is one flower more than another which seems essential to an English April, it is the primrose. Yet how unoriginal and repetitious is the poets' April in this respect. There is a passage in *Modern Painters* where Ruskin, an eminent Victorian urgently awaiting his revivalist, compares Perdita's flowers with those of Lycidas. He finds more imagination in Shakespeare's, more fancy in Milton's verses, which he prints with marginalia as follows:

'Bring the rathe primrose, that forsaken dies,	<i>Imagination.</i>
The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,	<i>Nugatory.</i>
The white pink, and the pansy freaked with jet,	<i>Fancy,</i>
The glowing violet,	<i>Imagination.</i>
The musk rose, and the well-attired woodbine,	<i>Fancy, vulgar.</i>
With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,	<i>Imagination.</i>
And every flower that sad embroidery wears.	<i>Mixed.'</i>

In Shakespeare's verses, he says, 'the imagination goes into the very inmost soul of every flower,' while 'Milton sticks in the stains upon them, and puts us off with that unhappy freak of jet.' It may be. But Perdita's

'pale primroses,
That die unmarried, ere they can behold
Bright Phoebus in his strength, a malady
Most incident to maids,'

are, after all, of the same plucking as 'the rathe primrose that forsaken dies.' With all due respect to Ruskin, I should call them equally fanciful, in the sense that they are both bookmen's flowers, as anthropomorphic in their origin as any grown in the garden of the *Rose*. To 'the very inmost soul' of an April primrose, if the phrase be admissible at all, I shall submit that a later poet sought to penetrate without reference either to Shakespeare or to Milton. But, first, in order to point the contrast, let us gather from bookmen's preserves the most fanciful garland of all, and the most remote from common earth and sky. On January 1, 1641, three or four years after *Lycidas*, the amorous duc de Montausier in Paris, presented a *Guirlande de Julie* to his mistress of that name in her parents' 'Hôtel de Rambouillet.' It contained sixty-three poems on twenty-nine leaves of vellum, each decorated with a hand-painted border. Sixteen were written by the duc himself, and among the other contributors was Valentin Conrart, the first

secretary of the French Academy. The primrose was not included, but, among many other flowers, the modest violet assured Julie, that

‘ Si sur votre front je me puis voir un jour,
La plus humble des fleurs sera la plus superbe ’;

the rose would rather win

‘ l’honneur de vous servir,
Que celui de régner dans l’empire de Flore ’;

and of the lily the exquisite lover said, at the very height of the French monarchy :

‘ Belle, ces Lys que je vous donne
Auront plus d’honneur mille fois
De servir à vôtre couronne
Que d’être couronnés aux armes de nos rois.’

We must not crush these precious blooms, but plainly they never drew breath in the open air.

It was Wordsworth in *Peter Bell*, which he wrote in 1798, who first tried to align Nature’s April with the poets’. It has been held that he failed in the attempt ; at least, failure was thrust upon him by the ridicule of contemporaries when he published the poem in 1819. But, rightly or wrongly, he did try not to stick in the colour of the primrose, but to get down to its very inmost soul. So trying, he had no use either for the image of the flower as a parched virgin, or for the yet more bookish fancies which delighted the florists in the *chambre bleue*. He relied on Nature, personified, but unassisted, to work the spiritual conversion which was wrought in the soul of the Ancient Mariner, Peter Bell’s exact contemporary, by supernatural machinery. Peter’s vocation as an itinerant potter, carrying his hardware on an ass from village to village, should have subdued him to the influences of Nature in her changing scenes and seasons. But, though he dwelt in her presence,

‘ Nature ne’er could find the way
Into the heart of Peter Bell.’

That was his misfortune, and, in a sense, his fault, for, shutting out pity from his heart, he shut out Nature’s intrusive purpose :

‘ The soft blue sky did never melt
Into his heart, he never felt
The witchery of the soft blue sky ’—

the natural witchery, materialised for the Mariner into visible shapes of terror. So,

'A primrose by a river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more.'

What more should it have been? Not the primrose of the botanists, however accurate their knowledge, and not the primrose of the bookmen, however lovely their images, but something nearer to the soul of the flower as articulated by Wordsworth in 1831 (exactly a hundred years ago) in his stanzas, 'The Primrose of the Rock':

'A lasting link in Nature's chain,
From highest heaven let down;'

a chain linked in fellowship, faith and truth, through flower, and stem, and root, to the rock fastened in the earth, which is constant to the universe and its Maker. If Peter (which means a rock, by the way) had seen this much 'more' in the yellow primrose, he might have stopped beating his ass before its cries made a universal noise and aroused 'something Peter did not like.' Then, indeed, he found 'more' to the primrose:

'The moon uneasy look'd and dimmer,
The broad blue heavens appeared to glimmer,
And the rocks stagger'd all around.'

Nature, bare of all weapons, made her way into the heart of Peter Bell, and he might have been said, in the very words of the Ancient Mariner, whom she had subdued with her panoply of magic:

'All fixed on me their stony eyes
That in the moon did glitter.'

The means of conversion were the same: the difference was in the use that the poets made of them.

In Wordsworth at last we reach a poet who left April to tell its own message, undistracted by science or art. The vehicles of this message are familiar to the 'heart that watches and receives'; and, though it is not easy to train the vision which will 'see into the life of things', or to cultivate the mood when we shall be 'laid asleep in body, and become a living soul,' in communication with the soul of the universe, yet the sensational stimuli are all about us. When we have acquired the longer eyesight, Otranto

and Udolpho are not more full of them than the hills and dales of April in England :

‘ These forms of beauty have not been to me,
As is a landscape to a blind man’s eye ’

(to Peter Bell’s closed eye, for example) ;

‘ But oft, in lonely rooms, and ’mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart. . . .
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts ; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the Mind of Man,
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.’

There was no deposit of ‘ barren leaves ’ in this perception.

If we might fit poets to months, one to each through the changing year, we should assort Wordsworth with April. He was born and he died in that month. He opened, like April, a renaissance of tender and shimmering life, and he wore its green plant without self-consciousness. But more commonly our literary seasons are dressed, like our women-folk, by foreigners. We celebrate German Christmases and Italian Mays. The trouble of Tennyson’s ‘ May Queen,’ it may be submitted, is that she caught an English cold while rehearsing such an occasion. There is an English poet, however, who can be fitted to an English month even more exactly than Wordsworth to April, both because of her method in observing it and of a certain likeness in her language to its music. Mrs. Meynell practised in verse and prose a parsimony of production which corresponded to her fastidiousness and delicacy in craftsmanship. The poem by which I should characterise her is her ‘ Sonnet : In February,’ and it is as February’s poet that her reputation may endure :

‘ Rich meanings of the prophet-Spring adorn,
Unseen, this colourless sky of folded showers,
And folded winds ; no blossom in the bowers.
A poet’s face asleep is this grey morn.
Now is the midst of the old world forlorn

A mystic child is set in these still hours.
 I keep this time, even before the flowers,
 Sacred to all the young and the unborn.
 To all the miles and miles of unsprung wheat,
 And to the Spring waiting beyond the portal,
 And to the future of my own young art,
 And, among all these things, to you, my sweet,
 My friend, to your calm face and the immortal
 Child tarrying all your life-time in your heart.'

The sextet is less perfect than the octave, though the 'unsprung' wheat and the inexpressive child carry out the authentic February notes in 'unseen,' 'colourless,' 'folded,' 'asleep,' 'grey,' 'still,' 'unborn.' Similar to this sonnet is another, written when, in youth, she became a Catholic, and included in the leaflet for her Memorial Service on November 27, 1922. 'Giving the bud,' she wrote, 'I give the flower. I dedicate my fields when Spring is grey'; and she smiled serenely at the idea that she did rashly to pledge her 'hidden wheat.' We do not grudge this rehandling of the symbols, for February is not a vocal month, albeit its silence, as we were reminded by Francis Thompson in a verse cited on the same leaflet, is itself 'music mute.' Even that smile in rashness is reflected—from the other end, as it were—in the stanzas inscribed by 'the poet to his childhood,' where a grown man is imagined by Mrs. Meynell as acquiescing retrospectively in the choice of hills, solitude and rain, to which he was committed by his child-self:

'You were rash then, little child, for the skies with storms are wild,
 And you faced the dim horizon with its whirl of mists, and smiled,
 Climbed a little higher, lonelier, in the solitary sun,

To feel how the winds came on. . . .

I rebel *not*, child gone by, but obey you wonderingly,
 For you knew not, young rash speaker, all you spoke, and now
 will I,

With the life, and all the loneliness revealed that you thought fit,
 Sing the Amen, knowing it.'

Again and again it recurs, in these few, thin, exquisite poems, that voice of conscious dedication in the time of the hidden wheat: the voice of February, folded in unfulfilment, aware of the inevitable harvest, and greeting it,—is it with courage or resignation? In the 'Song of the Spring to the Summer: The Poet sings to her Poet,' in the 'Letter from a Girl to her own Old Age,' and in sundry lesser pieces, this motive of 'The Poet to his Childhood' is repeated

with variations ; and it is only our doubt whether the acceptance of the fate of life is a signal of the poet's courage or of her resignation, which restrains us from the ecstasy of our predecessors. Fifty years ago, or thereabouts, Ruskin, Coventry Patmore and other critics (but chiefly, for our present purpose, Ruskin) could hardly find epithets generous enough in eulogy. Rossetti knew 'Renouncement' by heart, and declared that it was one of the three finest sonnets ever written by women (the other two must be in 'Sonnets from the Portuguese'), and Ruskin described the 'Letter from a Girl' as 'perfectly heavenly.' We differ from those high authorities with extreme reluctance, and, indeed, there are beauties of diction in these poems which merit all the praises poured upon them. But we have sometimes wondered, as we read the plangent verses,—would a February so conscious of the future ever have pressed on to April ? Would the wheat have sprung in those fields, or the winds have unfolded their healing, or the Spring have beaten through the portal ?

'Only one youth, and the bright life was shrouded.
Only one morning, and the day was clouded.
And one old age with all regrets is crowded.

'Oh, hush ; oh, hush ! Thy tears my words are steeping.
Oh, hush, hush, hush ! So full, the fount of weeping ?
Poor eyes, so quickly moved, so near to sleeping ?

'Pardon the girl ; such strange desires beset her.
Poor woman, lay aside the mournful letter
That breaks thy heart ; the one who wrote, forget her.' . . .

If life is struggle, and effort, and agony, this is not the spirit of the fighter, and February, we feel, must be fulfilled with a stronger purpose and a more strenuous resolve. We would not peer too closely into a 'renouncement,' but it was a poet¹ better inured to our harsh climate who flung out the careless challenge :

'April, April, laugh thy girlish laughter,
And, a moment after,
Weep thy girlish tears.'

This difference between poets' April and Nature's April is, of course, nearly allied to the problem which agitated critics in the concrete form of the Haig statue. Was the sculptor to mould a

¹ Sir William Watson.

'real' horse, perhaps with a forepaw breaking the art-convention, like Mr. Collier's hand on the frame of his self-portrait, or was he to invent an 'idea' of a horse, a kind of heraldic steed, composed of all ideal equine qualities, but corresponding to no horse ridden by man? And the rider: was he to be Earl Haig, the Field-Marshal in his habit as men saw him, or were the Haig lineaments, bearing and accoutrement to be used recognisably, yet generally, as the basis of a model for posterity of a great nation's commander-in-chief in war? That such questions are not often asked in England is doubtless due to the fact that our sun does not shine with the force requisite for marble. When they are asked, accordingly, we find it difficult to formulate a final answer, despite the hospitality of *The Times* and the piety of the First Commissioner of Works. And, indeed, in a sense, they are unanswerable. For the solution lies not with the public, but with the artists, in whatever medium they may work. So, when Chaucer went to the *Roman de la Rose*, and to the Latin books behind it, for an ideal (or heraldic) setting of the *Canterbury Tales*, he knew his business as an artist. He did not want the April of 1387, whether cold or warm, wet or fine, nor the flowers, trees and birds to be observed between Southwark and Canterbury: he wanted, and first invented for English poetry, a plausible, presentable April, as well suited to '88 as to '87, containing enough of Aprilness, in quantity and kind, to convince every reader of his *Tales*, and to be recognised wherever in England his readers, visualised by him as one man, might live. He drew the materials for this picture, and assembled its parts, from such artists' stores as he could reach. The Greeks were not directly accessible: even Petrarch, whom Chaucer met, and Boccaccio, whom he probably missed in Italy, could only get at Homer through the offices of a rough and unready translator; but he rifled some of the Latin source-books, and he relied, chiefly, as we saw, on the *Roman de la Rose*, which had enjoyed a hundred years' start as the modern poets' enchiridion. Thence he fetched the stage-properties for a vernal background, which his genius enabled him to work up into an English Spring, surrounding, impelling and gathering the pilgrims from all the shires to Kent. Inevitably, then, he introduced some conventional features into English poetry. April became known by its symbols, which were not always and everywhere the real signs. But the real and the ideal were merged together. Poets' April might bear traces of foreign origin, but it became acclimatised and naturalised, and its stranger epithets grew familiar by use.

We need not pause in this context to point out the connection of these facts with the old quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns, and with Pope's theory, borrowed from France, that the road to Nature led through Greece :

'First follow Nature, and your judgment frame
By her just standard, which is still the same ; . . .
Be Homer's works your study and delight,
Read them by day and meditate by night ;
Thence form your judgment, thence your maxims bring,
And trace the Muses upward to their spring.'

But, without following this disputed path to-day, we may at least suggest that Robert Browning's famous aspiration 'to be in England, now that April's there,' was, in a double sense, a 'home-thought from abroad.'

LAURIE MAGNUS.

LITERARY ACROSTICS.

A LITERARY Acrostic is published every month, and the Editor of THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE offers two prizes to the most successful solvers. The winners will be entitled to choose books to the value of £1 from Mr. Murray's catalogue. If several solvers send solutions of equal merit, the two whose answers are opened first will win the prizes.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC NO. 92.

'You may break, you may shatter the vase if you will,
But the ——— of the ——— will hang round it still.'

1. 'Eternal ——— gilds them yet,
But all, except their sun, is set.'
2. 'Shall I call thee Bird,
Or but a wandering Voice?'
3. 'She ——— each mortal thing
Upon the dull earth dwelling.'
4. 'Howe'er it be, it seems to me,
'Tis only ——— to be good.'
5. 'Twas brillig, and the slithy ———
Die gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.'

RULES.

1. Only one answer may be sent to each light.
2. Every correct light and upright will score one point.
3. With his answer every solver must send the coupon that is printed on page viii of 'Book Notes' in the preliminary pages of this issue; and he must be careful to give also his real name and address.
4. Solvers should not write either the quotations or the references on the same paper as their answers. It is not necessary, or even desirable, to send them at all.
5. Solvers who write a second letter, to correct a previous answer, must send the complete solution as they wish it, and not merely state the desired alteration.
6. Answers to Acrostic No. 92 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE, 50 Albemarle Street, London, W.1, and must arrive not later than April 21. No answers will be opened before this date.

ANSWER TO No. 91.

1. S	e	A
2. E	dmonto	N
3. R	oughes	T
4. V	anis	H
5. I	dl	E
6. C	har	M
7. E	ye	S

PROEM: Milton, *Il Penseroso*.

LIGHTS:

1. Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, iv. 178.
2. Cowper, *John Gilpin*.
3. Longfellow, *The Wreck of the Hesperus*.
4. FitzGerald, *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, xvi.
5. Tennyson, *The Princess*, iv.
6. Shakespeare, *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, ii. 2.
7. Herrick, *Hesperides*. *To Anthea, who may command him Anything*.

Acrostic No. 90 ('Did run smooth') was taken entirely from Shakespeare. The prizes are won by Miss Fleming, 5 Sydenham Terrace, Monkstown, Co. Cork, Ireland, and Miss Good, Wakefield Lodge, Potterspurty, Northampton; these two solvers will choose books from Mr. Murray's catalogue to the value of £1.

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